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By Edwin Lassetter Bynner

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ZACHARY PHIPS

BY

EDWIN LASSETTER BYNNER

AUTHOR OF "AGNES SURRIAGE," "THE BEGUM'S DAUGHTER"
"PENELOPE'S SUITORS," ETC.



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ZACHARY PHIPS.

CHAPTER I.

MASTER TILESTON sat making pens at his desk, that famous piece of furniture in whose capacious maw, according to boyish tradition, lay hidden the richest store ever known of tops, marbles, jack-knives, and other toys, collected during a long and memorable career. The crowning event of the school year was close at hand, for Selectmen's Day was more properly an event than a mere arbitrary division of time. It was, moreover, although in no strict sense a crisis, distinctively an ordeal, inasmuch as the results of the year's work were then to appear. Naturally enough, therefore, despite his mask of composure, Master Tileston showed, by the occasional twitching of an eyelid and the tapping of his silver-buckled shoe upon the floor, signs of inward disturbance. Let it not be thought from this that the good man lacked confidence in himself. On the contrary, it may be doubted if anybody ever had a juster estimate of his own powers. His present agitation was due simply to the approach of an unusual event in a life of absolute routine. Besides, he knew the best and the worst of Selectmen's Day; it was,

after all, an old story, for he had weathered many an anniversary of it since the time when he first came as Master Hicks's usher to join the famous North Writing School of Old Boston.

After the hint already let drop, it need hardly be added that Master Tileston was no longer a young man. Yet, notwithstanding the fact that his youth and his prime were misty by-gones, his influence remained unimpaired. Whether this was due to the suggestion of energy still apparent in his unbowed figure, to the look of authority in his severe eyes, to the expression of firmness in his close-shut lips, or, more likely than all, to the traditions of a half century of wholesome old-time discipline handed down from one generation of unruly boys to another, certain it is that Master Tileston was still an object of respect, not to say terror, to his flock.

Being thus secure of his authority in the main, he showed none of the small anxiety of weak men to uphold it in little points. He was nobly above watching and spying, and the like petty pedagogic tricks. Trusting solely to rule and precept, he little dreamed how much he owed in the way of influence to the effect produced by his own awe-inspiring presence, nor again how much that effect was heightened by an unconscious conservatism in the matter of dress. The truth is, if his garb had been fashioned to that very end, it could not have served better the purpose of enhancing the grim majesty of his person. His cocked hat, his powdered wig, his long-skirted coat, his voluminous waistcoat, and lastly his silver-headed Malacca stick, — still carefully

preserved in the collection of the Bostonian Society, with its queer joint at the top suggesting a hidden Toledo blade, — these were the accessories of a person not to be lightly encountered save by the innocent and pure in heart.

Just now, however, the cocked hat is hanging quietly on the wall, the Malacca cane stands peacefully in the corner, and Master Tileston is intent on making his pens. Probably there never lived upon earth one who could more deftly and speedily convert a goose-quill into a medium for formulating thought. With swift, clean stroke he made the first transverse cut, with nicest judgment slit and blunted the nib; and having with a critical air tried each transformed feather on his thumbnail, he threw it upon the table before him. When the last pen was finished he swept away the litter, drew towards him a pile of copybooks, and having tested upon a piece of waste paper the stroke of his own especial quill, he canted his head the least bit to one side, compressed his lips, and with the confident air of one supereminent in his craft proceeded to write at the head of the final page in each book, in bold, clear script, the last copy of the year, —

HONOR AND SHAME FROM NO CONDITION RISE.

Not the least surprising thing about Master Tileston was the fact that he managed to write at all; for having when a child fallen into the fire, the flames had so maimed and distorted his right hand that it seemed little better than a stump. None the less it was, as all agreed, his most characteristic mem-

ber, at once an object of ridicule and of respectful regard; for, as described in after years by a distinguished pupil of the old pedagogue, a stroke from those crumpled fingers was like nothing so much as a blow from the beak of an albatross. For the rest it needed only to adjust any required utensil between the distorted thumb and fingers, and directly the old master showed himself capable of wielding it, whether quill, penknife, or rattan, with memorable effect.

Ranged before Master Tileston on that warm summer morning, away back in the beginning of the century, were thirty or forty boys of ages varying from six to fourteen years. They sat upon wooden benches without backs, and had before them long forms, on which they lolled and sprawled at their writing or ciphering.

While Master Tileston prepared the copybooks, Usher Carter at the back of the room was practicing a class in reading the Beatitudes, for at a day still long before the era of reading-books, the Bible usually furnished the text for exercises of that kind. The long forenoon was nearly spent, when, wearied by the silence and restraint and perhaps encouraged by the absorbed air of their instructor, certain restless boys began to hitch about on their benches, throw paper-balls, slyly kick their neighbors, and in divers other ways seek relief for their long-pent spirits.

Master Tileston seemed too much engrossed in his task to note these skirmishes. Perhaps he was really engrossed, perhaps he had schooled himself to

a wise insensibility to the small disturbances of the schoolroom. Be that as it may, the roguish offenders, emboldened by success, presently proceeded to more flagrant breaches of decorum. Still Master Tileston sat, with attention, as it seemed, fixed exclusively upon his copy, as he firmly rounded the tails of his letters, or opened with careful precision the loops of his f's, his h's and his l's.

At last one audacious third-bencher succeeded in fastening a rude cartoon to the coat-tail of Usher Carter, as that unsuspecting young man passed up the aisle. This was a test quite too severe for any boy's gravity. A murmur of suppressed tittering swelled in the small space of a minute to an irrepressible outburst of laughter, as Usher Carter, returning down the aisle, innocently flaunted the grotesque placard in the eyes of the whole school.

Directly Master Tileston awoke to the occasion.

Deliberately putting down his quill, he came forth in front of his desk, stamped on the floor, and in a voice of thunder cried, —

“Silence!”

There was a moment's pause, broken by spasmodic gigglings from one or two boys whose sense of humor overrode all fear of consequences.

“A body 'd think Bedlam had broke loose here. What is it?—eh? What's the matter, I say? You, sir, what are you laughing at?”

“That! that!” pointing at Usher Carter's back.

“Who did it?” demanded the master sharply, as the giggling broke out afresh. “Was that you, Abel Hubbard?”

A boy sitting at the end of the bench hesitated and changed color.

"Come here, sir! Come here to me!" continued Master Tileston, with a significant movement towards his desk.

Hubbard arose, and went forward with faltering step. The tittering had quite ceased now. A pin might have been heard to drop in the room. Meanwhile Master Tileston removed his glasses, settled his wig upon his head, took a stout rattan from his desk, and, with a truly terrible deliberation, adjusted it in his maimed hand. Then pausing, to assure himself by a glance of the attention of the school, he seized the culprit by the collar and plied the rod upon his back and shoulders until he roared again.

"There, sir," said the venerable disciplinarian, stopping to catch breath, "now, sir, try your hand at making another picture."

"I—I d-did n't make it," whimpered the boy, rubbing his smarting back. "I—I only pinned it on."

"Who did make it, then?"

The boy was silent.

"Who did make it? I say," repeated the master, brandishing the rattan.

"S-Seth Mather."

"Oh, so Seth made it?" directing his eyes towards a stout boy on the second bench. "Seth, you may come here, sir."

The dismayed artist kept his seat.

"If I have to come after you, you'll remember it!"

Knowing, perhaps, from experience the significance of this threat, Seth stumbled up to the desk.

"So *you* made that picture, did you?"

"I — I did n't mean to."

"Did n't mean to, eh?" repeated Master Tileston, giving him a sudden cuff with the crumpled hand which made him reel. "You meant to make a map, I suppose! You meant to do a sum in vulgar fractions," went on the teacher, emphasizing each withering sarcasm with a fresh blow. "Now, go to your seat, sir! Go to your seats, both of you! Mr. Carter, let your class attend to me! I've got a word to say to this school."

Usher Carter, pausing in his exercise, gave attention at this unusual summons. Master Tileston put on his glasses and cleared his throat.

"You all know," he began, with memorable emphasis, "that it is Selectmen's Day to-morrow; that the officers of the town and other visitors are coming here to see what kind of a school I keep. Now, they won't find you've l'arned a great deal, but they *will* find that you can keep order, or I'll know the reason why. There have been too many monkey-shines going on here lately, and it's got to be stopped, I tell you now an' here!"

The speaker stamped his foot and raised his stump in solemn warning as he concluded: —

"Mark my words, now! any boy caught whispering or playing, from this time until the close of school to-morrow, will get a flogging he'll remember to the end of his days."

This speech, preceded by the sharp discipline

above described, produced an immediate effect. The boys, in sobered mood, addressed themselves again to their studies. Usher Carter proceeded with his recitation, while Master Tileston, with an air of satisfaction, went back to his seat.

Adjusting his ruffles, he drew forth a japanned snuff-box, tapped it deliberately, and, having carefully packed each expectant nostril with the pungent dust, calmly proceeded with his work as if in entire forgetfulness of the little episode which had just taken place.

But, as it proved, the morning was not to pass without other experiences. On the very first row of benches, and directly before the master's desk, sat Zachary Phips, son of Obadiah Phips, the well-known maltster of the North End. Zachary, who, judging by his size, seemed about eight years of age, was otherwise a gawky, ungainly-looking child. His hair was long and none too well combed, his face might have been cleaner, and his hands were downright grimy. He was dressed in a pair of homespun breeches, big, clumsy shoes, and a long-sleeved apron of coarse blue cotton, familiarly known as a "swingle-toe."

Zach had been an attentive witness of the discipline above described, and, naturally impressed with Master Tileston's warning, he turned with renewed attention to his lessons.

As he sat with elbows leaned upon the whittled and ink-splashed form before him, conning his Dilworth's Speller, which, save a battered copy of the Psalter, was his only schoolbook, a voice sounded in his ear:—

"Zach! Zach!"

"Eh?"

"Lend me your blow-rag!"

"Ain't got any."

"Ho—o—o!" incredulously.

"Marm Dinely won't gimme another, 'cause I lost that one last week at Winnisimmet."

"I shall take your apron then."

"Let go!"

"I got to wipe my nose!"

"Stop, I say. Johnny Crump is lookin'!"

"Phips, are you whispering?"

This question, asked in a certain repressed raucous tone well known to every experienced ear in the school, struck a silence through the room. The boy who was drawling through the Beatitudes stopped mid-phrase in "Blessed are the merciful." All felt that a crisis was at hand.

"Come here to me, sir!"

The tone was ominous. With natural reluctance, the small culprit arose and went shuffling forward, his grimy hands nervously fumbling with his long apron.

"Stand there! Now, sir, were you whispering? I say."

There was no answer.

"Eh?"

"Yeah, I was," at last faltered the offender, twisting his apron up into knots the while, and watching every movement of his stern judge with anxious interest.

"What were you whispering about?" continued

the master with a calmness more terrible than any violence.

"I — I don't know — I forget."

"Repeat to me the very words you said!"

There was a pause; then, whether from a native scorn of prevarication, whether from a shrewd perception of the uselessness of any extenuating plea, Zach clinched his hands, straightened his sturdy little figure, and stammered, —

"I — I only said" —

"Go on, sir!"

"Johnny Crump is lookin'!"

Nettled by this opprobrious nickname founded upon his deformity, which generations of boys had handed down to their successors in the school, and furthermore incensed at this speedy defiance of his late warning, Master Tileston turned perceptibly pale as he rose from his seat and came out before the desk.

"Oh, you only said 'Johnny Crump is lookin';' that was all you said?" he remarked, as with a blood-curdling air of preparation, he slowly turned back his ruffles. "That was all, eh? Well, Johnny Crump *was* looking, as you will find to your cost!"

The blows dealt by the outraged master were so merciless that after a whole minute's endurance the sufferer, with a sudden wrench, broke from his hold, and, whirling about on the amazed pedagogue, cried, —

"You 'll never lick *me* again, old Johnny Crump, Crumpity Crump!"

Whereupon, before the dumfounded master could

interfere, he darted from the room, shutting the door behind him with a resounding slam.

Once out of doors, Zach's first thought was to avoid pursuit. He lost no time in deliberation, but darting across North Bennett Street, on which the school stood, he scaled a fence, and making his way by short cuts, well known to him, through the intervening gardens, he came out into Prince Street, and thence took a bee line to Dock Square, where, wandering into the stable yard of the old Brasier Inn, he mingled with the crowd of teamsters, hostlers, and hangers-on, and for the first time stopped to take breath and counsel.

While he stood looking about, thinking where to go and what to do next, the ringing of the noontide bell in a steeple hard by reminded him that it was dinner-time, while certain savory odors from the inn kitchen awoke in him cravings natural to one who had not broken his fast since six o'clock in the morning.

The voice of this inward monitor became more imperative as the short noon-hour slipped away. He turned on his heel and walked down the yard so that he might not see the greedy men within at their meal. There, seated on an old cart-wheel, he thought of the family at home gathered about the humble board in Salutation Alley, and of the wondering comments of his father and his step-mother as to his absence. Yet dared he not go home, lest he might encounter Master Tileston, or some of his emissaries come to give a report of his revolt.

Meantime the precious moments were fast slipping

away. He walked about the stable yard aimlessly. He could not make up his mind to anything. He had no money to get a dinner at the inn. He had no friend to whom he dared appeal. The prospect of another six-hour fast seemed, from the boy's point of view, appalling. In the midst of his doubting and hesitation, the guests came filing out of the old inn with unctuous lips and comfortable looks of satiety, bandying stupid jokes and picking their teeth with straws.

Reflecting that, by this time, the danger of meeting Master Tileston was lessened by the approach of the hour for the afternoon session, he skirted the dock, and going a roundabout way, presently arrived in the rear of his father's garden, which stretched back from Salutation Alley to Battery Street.

There, skulking behind the lilac bushes for an observation, he at last crept up to the back door, and with an air of innocence, very clumsily assumed, entered the house.

He halted in the little passageway, and looked furtively towards the half-opened kitchen door. The smell of boiled cabbage pervading the premises made his mouth water, and thus rebellious appetite pricked on his flagging resolution.

Calling up a look of determination, he at last entered the room. On the hearthstone, otherwise littered with pots and pans, stood his father, who had just taken a live coal from the embers to light his pipe; his step-mother, with bustling movement, was clearing the table. From the look which the two

turned upon the culprit as he entered, it was clear that he had been the subject of their conversation.

Mrs. Phips, born Rebecca Dinely, was a middle-aged woman, with an air of energy befitting one who did her own housework without the aid of slave or servant.

Constant drudgery left her small leisure for the cultivation of other faculties than those called into exercise by her narrow round of duties, a fact not to be lost sight of in any summary of her faults and merits as an individual. To care for her household, do her duty as a neighbor, and maintain her good and regular standing as a member of the church hard by in Methodist Alley, this was her aim in life, and who shall say it was not a worthy and adequate one judged from any standpoint? If in the government of her step-children she stretched certain severe old maxims as far as they could well go, it was all done, be sure, under the guidance of an active regulating conscience, and Mrs. Rebecca would have answered a call to judgment at any moment with as little misgiving as any misguided zealot who ever died at martyr's stake.

"So!" she cried, at sight of Zach halting in the doorway, "you've come home, runaway! What d'ye want here? We harbor no truants here!"

Zach, seeing that Master Tileston had been beforehand with him, vouchsafed no explanation.

"A pretty piece of business," went on Mistress Becky, rattling her dishes, "running away! What d'ye come here for, I say?"

"I want my dinner!" said Zach.

"Ye won't git any dinner here, I can tell ye that. I ain't got any dinner for runaways!"

Gathering himself for a defiant answer, the offender caught his father's eye. The worthy maltster tipped his son a solemn wink. But whether misunderstanding this signal, or disdaining any subterfuge, the wrathful boy persisted in a rebellious tone: —

"I 'm hungry, an' I want sunthin' to eat."

"We don't keep vittles here for runaways, I tell ye."

"I ain't a runaway," answered Zach sullenly.

"What ye doin' here, then, this time o' day? What ye got to say for yerself?"

Zach made no answer, but looked wistfully towards the pantry.

"Ye goin' to answer me when I speak, or not?" continued his step-mother, seizing him by the collar and giving him a vigorous shake.

"Let go! Let go o' me, old Marm Dinely!" shouted the incensed boy.

"I'll let go o' ye when I git through, and not afore!" retorted the conscientious Becky, as by turns she cuffed and shook her struggling victim.

"Father! father!" shouted Zach, turning again for succor to his natural parent.

The cautious Obadiah looked ill at ease. A flush passed over his irresolute face. He cleared his throat, and said, in a tone of feeble protestation, —

"I guess ye've gin him enough, Becky."

"Who asked you to guess anythin' about it? I know when I've gin him enough 'thout any advice from you."

"Father! stop her, father!" appealed Zach again.

"I'll father ye!" cried Mistress Becky, dragging her prisoner towards the door; "you come along o' me! If yer father had the spunk of a mouse, he'd take ye back to school himself; but if he don't, I will!"

"Stop! Stop! Leave me alone! I won't go!" roared the culprit, holding back with might and main.

"Master Tileston'll see to *your* case," continued the energetic step-mother, as, having propelled her charge into the yard, she turned to shut the door. "I don't b'lieve you'll want to run away agin in a hurry!"

Seizing the opportunity when his captor was occupied with the latch, Zach broke from her hold and darted away. Turning when at a safe distance, he picked up a stone, and, with a voice hoarse from rage and hate, cried, as he flung it at the pursuing matron, —

"Bah! bah! bah! old Marm Dinely, you go to the devil!"

Having vented his spite in this shocking manner, he ran away as fast as his legs could carry him. Choking with anger, sobbing with grief, he darted in and out the neighboring streets until, having baffled pursuit, he betook himself to a favorite haunt upon Scarlett's Wharf, where, sitting down on a water-soaked log, he gave way to his feelings in a long and violent fit of weeping.

Relieved by this outburst, he gradually resumed his self-control. Drying his eyes, he looked about

and found himself in the midst of a bustling scene. A coasting vessel was being loaded for sea. 'Longshoremen, stevedores, and sailors were hurrying to and fro, rolling casks, carrying bags and sacks, with the usual accompaniment of shouting and cursing. Insensibly Zach grew interested; he made his way to the edge of the dock and looked down upon the littered deck. Directly he heard himself hailed; it was a burly sailor, who cried, —

“Say, Bub, run up to the Ship Tavern an' git me some 'baccy, ther 's a hearty!”

Delighted to be of service to any one, Zach picked up the coin which was flung at him, and darted off to execute the commission.

When he returned, the sailor had disappeared. Zach walked over the gang-plank to the vessel to find him. Having delivered the tobacco he loitered to look about. In the hurry of the moment nobody heeded him. A thought entered his head. Watching his chance, he worked his way forward, went below, and hid himself in the forecastle, where, worn out with fatigue and the unusual excitement of the day, he presently fell asleep.

CHAPTER II.

ZACH was awakened by a shake of the arm and a gruff voice sounding in his ear. He started up bewildered. Two or three rough-looking men stood about his makeshift couch. The strange place, the bearded faces, the dim light, afforded the fit setting for a nightmare. Vainly, however, he strove to connect Master Tileston, his step-mother, his escape, of which he had just been dreaming, with this odd, cramped little place, this dizzying motion, and these curious, unfriendly eyes bent upon him.

"Wot ye doin' of here?" demanded the man who held Zach by the arm.

"Stealin' a go."

"Cuttin' stick."

"Givin' leg bail."

The suggestions poured in from the bystanders, not inexperienced in cases of the sort.

"Haul him up on deck! Sharky 'll settle *his* case," counseled a one-eyed tar.

"An' make short work of it, too!" added a neighbor, who had an anchor tattooed on his low forehead.

"He 'll h'ist him overboard, an' sarve him right," went on the One-eyed.

"Ay, with a brick in his pocket for ballast," grunted Zach's captor.

"Huh! the brick ain't baked yet 'ud sink *him*;

water can't drown these yer w'arf rats," put in the Tattooed.

Lying there in the midst of the group as helpless as a stray kid in a den of wolves, Zach was not composed enough to suspect that their bark might be worse than their bite. He took all their rough chaff in earnest. Not being able to speak for lumps in his throat, he dropped his eyes and sulked.

"Come, drag him out!" went on the last speaker, detecting Zach's dismay.

"Hold hard! Wot ye got there?" broke in a newcomer, peeping over the shoulders of his mess-mates.

"Move up, lubbers, an' give Sandy a squint!"

"Eh? Hanged if he ain't the brat fetched me the 'baccy; d' ye 'member me, young un?"

Zach nodded eagerly.

"Oh, stow him away! Give him a chance; where's the harm in him?" pleaded Sandy.

"Sharky's sure to nose him out sooner or later."

"An' then 't'll go wuss with him."

"An' wuss with us."

"'N' the deuce to pay all round," answered the others in justification.

"Ay, ay. Le's take him along up," said the One-eyed, anxious not to lose a chance of sport. "Everythin' 's taut. Sharky's had his grog, 'n' he's in good feather."

"Right!"

"Haul away!"

"Ay, ay!"

This being the general verdict, Zach was taken

on deck and led aft before the mate, otherwise known as Sharky, a burly man, whose big jaw and protruding teeth amply justified the sobriquet.

"Whar 'd ye git *him*?" he asked, looking Zach over quizzically.

"Asleep in the fo'cas'le."

"How come ye down thar?"

"I want to be a sailor," blurted out Zach, driven to a corner.

"Humph!" grunted the mate, by no means propitiated. "Wot 's yer name?"

"Zach."

"Whar d' ye hail from?"

"Salutation Alley."

"Boston Town?"

"Yeah."

"Folks live thar?"

"Yeah."

"Wot 'd ye run away for?"

"The schoolmaster licked me" —

A guffaw from the listening sailors interrupted the speaker.

— "'N' she would n't gimme anythin' to eat," he concluded, with a resentful glance at them.

"Who 's *she*?"

"Marm Dinely; she married my old man, but she ain't my mother."

"A hawk in the hen-roost, eh?" with a chuckle. "So the schoolmaster licked ye? Sarved ye right, too; how 's he goin' to larn ye anythin' 'thout whalin'? He 'll give ye wuss 'n' that when he gits ye back."

"I don't want to go back. I want to stay here."

"Ain't no room here for brats," answered the mate definitively, as he cut a fresh quid of tobacco.

"This 'ere kind grows like a weed, sir," put in Sandy, "if ye 'd have patience to hold on a bit."

"I ain't in the wet-nuss business," growled the mate. "Send him back on the next coastin' smack!"

"I won't go back!" shouted Zach desperately. "I want to be a sailor!"

"A sailor'!" repeated Sharky contemptuously, spattering Zach's feet with a shower of tobacco-juice. "I can't make a sailor out o' a swab like you no more 'n I can make a whistle out o' a pig's tail. Take him along!" he concluded, in an undertone, to the sailors.

But Zach's wrathful look as he was dragged away appealed in some way to Sharky's sense of humor, for as if struck by a sudden thought he called out:

"Hold on, there! Bring him back. Look here, young un, you know all about a ship now, I reckon, eh?"

"I know a good deal," said Zach stoutly.

"Can ye shin up a mast?"

"I gu-guess so."

"Go aloft, then, an' overhaul them throat hal-yards!" said the mate, with a mischievous wink at the men standing near.

Without hesitation Zach made the attempt. Grasping the shrouds as he had often seen the sailors do, he made fair enough headway until he reached the masthead. Here, pausing to take

breath, unhappily he cast a look downward towards the deck. Directly his head began to feel queer; he looked upward doubtfully and hesitated, but, encouraged by a murmur of applause from those below, he kept on. By and by a lurch of the vessel set the mast swaying; his giddiness increased; he paused, hesitated, and again looked down.

A scoffing laugh from the mate and a confused cry from the sailors nerved him to another desperate effort. Seizing the stay with trembling fingers, he shut his eyes, clinched his teeth, and made a last determined attempt to go on. In vain; his boyish will availed nothing against the whirring dizziness, the disabling nausea. He wavered a moment, loosed his hold, and fell. Happily the topping lift, throwing him into the belly of the sail, broke his fall. As it was, he struck the deck with force enough to render him insensible.

There was a murmur of sympathy and indignation among the sailors, quickly silenced by the mate, who, finding upon examination that a flutter of life was left, promptly washed his hands of any further responsibility.

“Take him below, an’ keep the little fool out from under my feet. I won’t have no orphan asylum round here.”

In obedience to orders, Sandy and another took up the senseless Zach and carried him below. There being no surgeon aboard, at the cook’s suggestion they stripped off his clothes and rubbed him vigorously with New England rum, ending by pouring a good stiff dose of it down his throat.

Under this heroic treatment Zach presently revived, and returned to a consciousness of much physical pain and mental misery.

Having, in their rough fashion, done what they could for him, the two sailors went away, leaving poor Zach moaning in his bunk. The cook from time to time thrust in his black head with a look of inquiry, as if to see whether he were alive or dead; and presently, more by way of experiment than benevolence, brought in a bowl of hot broth. This, acting upon the fasting and exhausted patient as a sedative, threw him into a deep sleep, which lasted the whole night.

Early in the morning Zach awoke. It cost him several minutes of hard thinking to account for his surroundings, and realize his situation. Thereupon, finding his head clear and his nausea gone, he thought himself quite well. When he tried to move, however, he discovered his mistake. There was something very odd and mysterious the matter. He found himself inextricably mixed up with a lot of sore and aching bones, which seemed not to belong to him.

As getting up was out of the question, he could only lie and listen to the strange noises, and wonder what they meant; wonder how far the ship was on her way; wonder what time of day or night it was, for the glimmering light in the forecandle afforded little guide. It was dark when the crew turned in and dark when they got up; it seemed always dark there. The cook brought food at irregular hours, as suited his convenience; but, for the rest, was

peevish and would answer no questions. Thus day and night were much the same to Zach. He took, perforce, no note of time, save of its dreary, dateless lapse. Again and again he groaned aloud from pure weariness, yet nobody heeded him.

As a veritable relief in the midst of it all, there arose one day or one night a commotion on deck; a rushing about of heavy feet, a rattling of cordage, a flapping of sails, mingled with excited cries. Very soon the vessel began to pitch and toss in a violent way. Up, up, up, she swept, until, to Zach's excited fancy, they touched the clouds; then, poising one breathless minute on the zenith's point, they went plunging down, down, down, as it seemed, to the oozy bottom of the sea. Through it all resounded the hoarse voice of the captain shouting orders to the crew. For years the odd words were fixed in the hearer's memory, and rang in his ears like a song's refrain.

"All hands ahoy! Lower away the halyards! Haul in the sheets! Heave-o-yo-o! Take in the spanker! Brail up! Man the clew-garnets! Ease away the sheet! Hand the mainsail! Lay aloft! Set the spencer! Haul aft the sheet! Heave-o-yo-o!" and the like meaningless jargon.

The gale lasted unnumbered hours; to Zach it seemed days. Thus tossed about, he once more fell a prey to nausea. By turns he slept, but these fragmentary naps seemed only to add to his bewilderment and misery. Gradually he awoke to a realizing sense that the sea had subsided, that the turmoil had ceased, and that the vessel was again gliding smoothly through the water.

Thereupon he began again to take note of his own condition. It seemed to him that he was deserted and forgotten by all the world. In his bitterness he thought regretfully of his old life in Salutation Alley, with all its drawbacks.

His musings were interrupted by a gruff voice at his side.

"Hello, shipmate! how goes it?"

He looked up quickly and recognized Sandy. He tried to speak, but instead of words there came a flood of tears.

"How now, young un! what's up?"

It was of no use; every effort at articulation ended in convulsive sobs. The elements having subsided, Zach was taking his turn at having a little gale of his own, a tempest which, with due regard to masses and forces, might well have been compared to the vaporous one. All the grief and wrath with which his little heart was packed came oozing forth in those scalding tears.

Sandy looked on amazed. It is doubtful if he had ever before witnessed such a human simoom. He stammered one or two words of protest, and stolidly waited.

The storm duly spent itself, the tears at last ceased to flow, and the throbbing heart slowed down to its normal running time.

"Got through?" asked Sandy sympathetically.

Zach did not deign to answer. He received with a resentful air this eleventh-hour comfort.

"I say, Bub, I ben thinkin' 'bout you," went on the visitor, taking off his cap and scratching his

matted hair as by-play to his talk. "'T ain't ben downright easy cruisin' with *me*, but it seems ez ef you must 'a' hed a long spell o' thick weather, to bawl like thet."

Still unpropitiated, Zach made no reply, but sulkily studied the speaker askance.

One could, indeed, hardly help looking at him. He was of that not uncommon type whose physical traits reach a pitch of ugliness where they acquire a distinctively fascinating value. He had a tall, gaunt, loose-jointed figure, a homely, freckled face, and a shock of carrotty hair. He was, furthermore, distinguished by an aggressively bony look; his skeleton seemed struggling at every point to assert itself, his big hands bristled with joints and knuckles, his legs seemed all knees and ankles. His skull was sharply outlined, while his square jaw and Roman nose completed the anatomical impression.

Scarcely glancing at Zach as he talked, he kept his eye fixed on the weather-beaten old cap which he smoothed on his knee. The brooding twilight of the forecastle, emphasizing the heavy down-lines of his face, gave him a saturnine expression, while the peculiar drawl with which he ended certain words had the vocal effect of a croak.

"You're a youngster, Bub, an' it may be all right for you to bawl; but it's a landlubber trick, 'n' I would n't do it!"

"I don't bawl!" said Zach angrily.

"Wall, I hope ye don't; it's no good; things go right on jest the same, sloppin' up an' down like the tide, — ebb 'n' flood, ebb 'n' flood, — 'n' ye can't

do nothin' to help it. When it gits so you can't stan' any more, jes' take it out swearin' to your self, or chawin' yer cud; yer too young for that yet, mebbe, but ye 'll find out some day that chawin' 's mighty easin' to the mind!"

Zach, awaking at last to the fact that all this was meant for sympathy, rolled over on his side and regarded the speaker with attention.

"But don't go flatterin' yerself, Bub, that things is goin' to be better bimeby! They ain't; they never will be; they 'll keep gittin' harder 'n' heavier 'n' tighter the hull livin' time. Ye 'll have all ye can stan' up under, never fear; don't never expect nothin' else."

He stopped to cut a piece of tobacco from his plug and put it into his mouth, where it made a big bulge in his cheek.

"This livin' business," he went on presently, squirting a mouthful of saliva at a knot in the floor and wiping his mouth on the back of his hand, "is a kind o' grin'stone 'thout no water on it; ye 're kep' squeezed right down agin it all the time, an' it jes' squinches the stuff right out o' ye, 'n' ther don't seem to be no help for 't."

Notwithstanding his gloomy face, his drawl, and his sombre talk, Zach derived unmistakable comfort from his visitor; while the latter, without any assurance from Zach, understood equally well that he was valued. These mutual impressions were not conveyed by words, still less by looks, but were the result of one of nature's mysterious little electrical operations.

The acquaintanceship thus begun was not suffered to languish; it quickly ripened to intimacy, and Zach presently discovered, not much to his surprise, that his new friend, in addition to certain deep-rooted prejudices against mankind in general, had a special loathing for Sharky, whose tyrannous rule awoke in him a rebellious spirit. Here was accordingly a further and stronger bond of union.

"Look a-here, Bub," Sandy began one morning, with a darkling look upwards towards the deck, "d'ye know what he's steerin' for?"

Zach shook his head.

"Well, he's goin' to ship ye back thar."

"Where?"

"To yer step-marm 'n' the schoolmaster."

"How do you know?" asked Zach, with a startled look.

"'Cos he let it all out to the second mate last night on deck. He's goin' to keep his claw on ye an' take ye back himself, in hopes to squeeze money out o' yer old man for bringin' ye back," he concluded in an impressive whisper.

Zach was so overwhelmed at thought of being the object of this black plot that for several minutes he could not speak.

"Now, see here, Bub," continued Sandy, cutting up some tobacco for his pipe and grinding it between his horny palms, "me 'n' you'll jes' knock the plug out o' that bung-hole."

"Yes," whispered Zach eagerly.

"Soon as we make land we'll watch chances an' " —

“Eh?”

“Cut stick.”

“Run away?”

“Yeah; I’m sick o’ this. I’m shipped for the round trip back to Bos’n agin, ’n’ I shall lose my pay, — but what’s the odds!”

“Where shall we go to?” asked Zach breathlessly.

“Wait ’n’ see, Bub! Wait ’n’ see! ther’s time enough; but keep dark, mind ye!” waving the hand which held his pipe warningly at his little hearer, “dark as Egypt! Jes’ lay right here; you ’re lame, ye know,” with an impressive wink, “’n’ as soon as we make land,” lowering his voice cautiously, “we ’ll show ’em a clean pair o’ heels.”

Overjoyed at this prospect of escape, Zach promised to do all that was required of him, and even acquiesced in the hard condition that his friend should pay him no more visits lest it should arouse suspicion. Thenceforth, accordingly, Sandy only looked in occasionally, with a nod or a word to let the boy know that he was not forgotten.

At last the longed-for time came. Zach was aroused one day by an unusual bustle on deck. The sounds of hurrying feet and the rapid succession of oaths and orders told him that something had happened. Straightway he flew into such a state of excitement that he had much ado to keep his bed. After an hour or more Sandy popped in his head, and informed him in a loud whisper that they were almost in; that the ship was sailing up the river, and would make dock before night.

“Now, Bub,” concluded Sandy, with the nearest

approach to animation he had ever shown, "keep yer eye peeled an' stan' from under, 'n' we 'll give 'em the slip the very first minit! Keep dark, 'n' I 'll pass ye the word!"

The prospect of so soon being at liberty set Zach in a quiver. He got up trembling like an aspen, put on his clothes, and crept back to bed. It seemed to him that he waited ages for Sandy to come. The suspense was almost too much for his philosophy, and he even had intermittent suspicions that his friend had gone without him.

But as other things earthly come to an end, so also did the voyage of the Susan Carter, and after the bustle attending the docking of the vessel was over, Sandy came creeping down to say that the captain had gone ashore with his papers to report, that the vessel was in charge of Sharky, and that it was only a question of time when he would be too drunk to know what took place.

With his teeth chattering from sheer excitement, Zach sat perched upon the head of a cask in the fore-castle, waiting for the promised signal to go. At last, hearing his name pronounced in a hoarse whisper, he groped his way up to the deck, where he found his companion waiting.

"Mum!" muttered Sandy, casting a cautious look about to make sure they were not observed. "Ready, now, here we go!"

With these words he picked up the trembling boy, and with one toss of his long arms landed him upon the pier. Directly afterwards, he sprang ashore himself, and the two slunk off in the darkness.

As they made their way up into the town and wandered along through the strange, dimly-lighted streets, Zach instinctively seized fast upon Sandy's big hand and clung close to his side, as if the rough sailor were the one friend left him now in all the world.

"Look here, Bub. we got to load up somew'eres; I'm empty as a bar'l. See, there's a place yonder whar that red light is; le's turn in an' see wot they got fer grub!"

Zach welcomed the suggestion, and thereupon they went in. It proved to be a small inn of the rough-and-ready sort usually to be found along the waterfront of a seaport town. The low-ceiled tap-room was filled with sailors drinking and smoking. Behind the bar stood a stout, bullet-headed man in a red flannel shirt, dealing out raw rum and brandy to his thirsty customers.

In answer to Sandy's demand for something to eat, he and Zach were shown to a small room down the passage, where a slatternly maid-servant placed before them some cold boiled beef, a brown loaf, and a pitcher of cider.

Having both eaten their fill, Sandy lighted his pipe and proceeded to explore his pockets for wherewithal to pay the scot. All told, his funds made a scanty showing. He counted the greasy-looking coins over and over, and shook his head gloomily.

"This can't go on, Bub; we've got to raise the wind straight away, or we're stranded."

Zach looked uneasy. Hitherto he had thought of Sandy as a person of vast and indefinite resources.

"It 'll be the soft side of a plank to-night, young un, and a tight squeeze for breakfast. After that there's nothin' but fool-luck 'twixt us an' the bottom."

"The bottom of what?" asked Zach, much startled.

"Everythin'."

"Goin' to sleep outdoors?"

"Yeah; an' the sooner we git out the better, for some o' our old gang 'll be turnin' up here."

Whereupon, closely followed by Zach, Sandy pulled his hat over his eyes, stalked into the tap-room, paid his lawing, and lounged carelessly out into the street.

The weather had changed for the worse, clouds covered the sky, and a piercing wind blew up from the river.

"Seen better nights 'n this fer campin' out, Bub," grumbled the sailor.

But Zach was too cold and tired and sleepy for any criticism upon the weather, as he trudged along after his tall companion in a homesick plight.

The sailor made his way down to the water-side, and in and out among the docks, glancing hither and thither with a watchful eye. Presently he stopped upon a pier piled with merchandise, saying, —

"Here we be, Bub; here's our chance. 'T ain't feathers, nor straw, but it's the next best thing, see? Cotton-bales, soft as down 'n' warm as sunshine. Stand stiff, now, 'n' I'll give ye a boost."

Suiting the action to the word, he hoisted the sleepy Zach up to the top of the pile.

"Now, young un," he continued, as he came climbing up after him, "keep to the leeward! the leeward, mind, out o' the teeth o' this nor'easter! Here ye be; creep down there!"

Having found a nook sheltered from the wind, the two stowed themselves snugly away and were soon sound asleep.

Next morning Zach awoke with a shiver, to find that Nature had played the part of his valet. A cold, drizzling rain was falling, and his face and hands were already washed. Worse than that, his clothes were almost drenched, and he had no change of garments at hand. Looking at Sandy, who lay still soundly sleeping, he hesitated whether to wake him, but the sight of his wet clothes settled the question.

Sandy, on being aroused, lost no time in yawning and stretching under such circumstances, but, jumping up at once, cried, —

"Come on, Bub, le's git out o' this! Cuss the weather! Jest my luck, this is. Come on! Le's board that old hulk agin, an' git dried out. Hope ye ain't hungry?"

"No — er, n-not real!"

"'Cos it 'll hev to be short pickin's this mornin'," fumbling in his pockets. "A bite an' a swaller, to keep yer stomach from squeezin' in."

Zach looked so dismayed at this news that Sandy added as a word of comfort, —

"But you keep a taut upper lip, young un! We 'll raise the wind to-day; we 've got to raise it, that 's the Dutch of it!"

They went shivering and dripping back to the little inn. It had not yet been put in trim for the day. Everything looked cold and dirty and neglected, — the tables covered with soiled glasses, the sanded floor with discarded tobacco quids, broken pipes, and other refuse, the bar with empty bottles. The slatternly maid, heavy-eyed from her broken rest, was sweeping out; the bullet-headed tapster was sunk in a sodden sleep behind the counter, all unconscious of a bleary-eyed loungee waiting for his morning dram.

It was not a cheering prospect, but the guests were little inclined to be captious. Accordingly, having waited patiently until the disheveled maid had swept the room, freshly sanded the floor, and set the furniture in order, Sandy approached her on the subject of food.

“Breakfast ain’t ready,” she answered curtly.

“ ‘Breakfast’ ! Oh, well — er — we ain’t per-tickler what ye call it; it’s vittles we want; a chunk o’ bread ’n’ a gulp o’ hot drink ’ll serve our turn.”

“Git in there, then, ’n’ I ’ll see!” was the ungracious answer.

Following the direction of the maid’s broomstick, the two went into the eating-room, where they were presently served with a stale loaf and some muddy coffee.

After eating the last crumb and drinking the last drop of this scanty provision, they were still far from satisfied, but having no other resource, went back to the tap-room and disconsolately sat down in

their wet clothes. Sandy filled his pipe, and reviewed the situation with a morose air, while Zach awaited in silence the result of his deliberation.

"This is a tough world, Bub!" broke out the sailor, after a little.

Accepting this as a profound and original reflection, Zach looked impressed.

"A tough world! There's things enough an' chances enough in it, only somehow they don't seem to fall to the folks that need 'em! There's nothin' lyin' round loose; everythin' belongs to somebody. The question is, how'd they git it? What I want to know is, how did all these folks git these things?"

Zach shook his head helplessly.

"Hanged if it don't seem's 'f everythin' hed been parceled out 'fore I was born."

"Was you always a sailor?" asked Zach suddenly.

"No, Bub. I was born down on the coast o' Maine, an' I was brought up a fisherman, 'n' if I'd stuck to it, I would n't 'a' been in this pickle. But here we be, 'n' we got to face the music. I never done no starvin' yet, 'n' I ain't goin' to begin now, I can tell 'em that!" he concluded, with a wave of his pipe, as if in warning to a hostile world.

Meanwhile the tap-room was gradually filling with its regular frequenters: sailors waiting to be shipped, superserviceable old salts come to discuss the water-gossip, and the lower class of case-hardened toppers.

To these entered presently a man not to be classed in either category, with regard to whom, however, two things were at once evident, to wit: first, that

he was superior in education and breeding to anybody else in the room, and, second, that he had come to the inn with a purpose more serious than to drink bad liquor and smoke villainous tobacco. For the rest, he was a middle-aged man, with a red face, long blonde hair, big, staring blue eyes, and divers peculiarities of feature and bearing which proclaimed his foreign birth.

Although his eyes wandered ceaselessly over the room in earnest observation of its inmates, he seemed not to have remarked Zach and Sandy in their dark corner until chance suddenly brought them into prominence.

A brawl arose among some sailors at a table next to them. Nobody concerned themselves at first in such an every-day matter. Very soon, however, after a babel of altercation, the parties came to blows. Thereupon one of them, a swarthy Portuguese, with an unsaintly visage adorned by dangling earrings, was seen to draw a knife. Rising quietly from his dark corner, Sandy interfered, seized the sailor, wrenched the knife from his grasp, and sent him sprawling among the spittoons and chair legs on the floor. Rising with a furious look, the Portuguese was about to rush upon his aggressor, but, deterred by Sandy's cool look and formidable thews, he paused, picked up his knife, and, with a torrent of threats in choice Portuguese, slunk out of the room.

Whereupon, resuming his seat, Sandy lighted his pipe and dismissed the matter from his thoughts. Not so the stranger. Fixing his eyes upon the sailor

with a quite peculiar interest, he directly began to scrape an acquaintance.

"Dis storm, dink you it vill last, mine fren'?" he asked, in a strong German accent.

"Mebbe 't will, an' mebbe 't won't," answered Sandy, stifling a yawn. "Can't tell nothin' 'bout the weather away from the sea."

"How blows de vind?"

"Wind?" answered Sandy contemptuously, "ther ain't any wind. These 'ere land puffs an' flukes don't count."

"Also 't is easy to see you are a sailor."

"I be when I git a chance."

"Say you so? You 'ave den no vork?"

"No," said Sandy, knocking the ashes out of his pipe and ruefully cutting up the heel of his plug for a last charge. "I 'm lookin' for a job, ef ye want the truth, cap'n."

"Ha, den, see you? You shall look no more. You shall come vith me."

"How long a cruise?"

"Hm—m—m, vell, I tell you now," lowering his voice, "'t is not on de sea ve go!"

Sandy began to shake his head.

"Not right away; ve come to it by 'n' by, see you? But first ve go by de land, den upon de grand rivers all de same vith de sea."

Sandy continued to shake his head; the stranger affected not to heed him.

"Listen, my fren', dis ees a great eggsbedition. You 'ave never such vork before, you 'ave never such money, such grog, such ration; an' after all dose, some oder dings may be at de end."

These promises appealed forcibly to Sandy's empty pocket and fasting stomach. Glancing at Zach's anxious face, a new thought struck him.

"Look a-here, cap'n!" he said, tipping back his chair and thrusting his huge hands to the bottom of his empty pockets. "I 'm dubious 'bout this business. I ain't no landlubber, an' I 'm too old a bird to teach new tricks; but ef I say *go*, that means the young un, too!"

The stranger turned a depreciating look upon Zach, and his face fell.

"Bah, no, no! he ees too young for such dings."

"It 's no go 'thout him," repeated Sandy firmly.

Much vexed, the stranger studied Zach again, and with a more critical air.

"It ees your son, dis one?"

"No."

"No? Vy, den, must he go? 'T ees better leave him pehint. Ve find some gut place, see you? an' —"

"No use, cap'n," broke in Sandy in a definitive tone.

Seeing that further discussion was useless, the stranger tapped on the table and whistled to hide his discomfiture. Sandy got up and stretched, as if weary of the discussion. Perhaps it was the sight of his bulk and brawn which decided the stranger, for he suddenly exclaimed: —

"Vell, vell, if he go, so must you dake on yourself de consequence. It ees a pargain, den, hein? Gut! Come to meet me to-morrow so early as you can at Bingham's; — de inn, de davern, see you? Ask for Bollman, — Dr. Eric Bollman, — unt ve dalk pout dot eggsbedition!"

CHAPTER III.

DULY next morning Sandy and Zach set forth to keep their appointment. "Bingham's" turned out to be a well-known tavern, and they found it without trouble. Hardly had they entered the tap-room and looked about, when they saw their friend of the day before talking with a stranger in a neighboring corner. Noting their entrance, he beckoned them to come forward, and whispered aside to his companion.

The stranger, a tall, lean man with an air of authority, glanced carelessly from Sandy to Zach and asked sharply, —

"Your child?"

"Well, no," answered Sandy, looking hard at a spot on the wall, and controlling his resentment of the stranger's manner; "he ain't nobody's child to speak of."

"What 's he doing here?"

"Dunno; guess ye 'd better ask him."

The stranger turned with an impatient look to his companion, who whispered something in his ear. The explanation, however, proved unsatisfactory, for it was met with prompt and emphatic objections. Finding his colleague intractable, the German next led Sandy aside. Instantly Zach took alarm. He knew well enough what they were talking about.

He watched them with anxious interest until he saw Sandy shake his head, then he drew a long breath. He was reassured. Sandy would not forsake him; the German might talk until doomsday. The stranger, meanwhile, was losing patience; he broke in upon them irritably.

"Well, well, Doctor, I must go. Do as you like! If he turns out a nuisance, you must take the blame. But if they go, get 'em ready at once. 'Tis time we were off already. I leave all these matters to you. You know the road. We shall overtake you before noon."

"Ah-h-h!" exclaimed Bollman, wiping his streaming forehead on his coat-sleeve and emitting a sigh of relief. "So, den, all ees right. You shall both go. Now, my fren's, sit down! Listen to me! I dell you last night I eggsblain dis mornin' vere we go, vat ve do, but you 'ave hear Colonel Dupeister," pointing after the stranger; "dere ees no longer time, also ve vait some oder day. But all ees right, never fear! It ees a great ding, a gr-rand ding, dees eggsbedition. Make all rich, — you, me, de boy, too, everybody, — vith lands, an' slaves, an' cattle; but," looking around suspiciously, "sh-h! it ees yet a secret; keep de mouth tight. I tell you someding: ve 'ave for leader a great man. Talk apout your Vashingtons, bah! dis ees de great American of all. Vell, he go vith us, he lead us. It ees for dat ve keep mum, see you? Go, now," he continued, drawing out his purse and handing Sandy some money, "get de clothes, unt de shoes, unt oder dings, unt come away back again like de

vind! Ve start yonder from de stable-yard in an hour; seexty minutes. Ve 'ave a horse for you, an' you vil take de boy on a pillion behint, see?"

Promising to be on hand, Sandy went rolling away, with Zach on a half-run at his heels. Steering straight for the river-streets with true seafaring instinct, he went first to a tobacconist and laid in a goodly supply of plug. This prime necessity of life secured, he next found out a cheap outfitting shop for sailors, where he bought what was needed in the way of clothes. There being a lack of infant sizes in stock, it resulted that Zach's pea-jacket was much too big for him. Little he cared, however, for so small a matter. Beholding himself at last, attired in true seaman's rig, his heart swelled well-nigh to bursting, and vainglory blinded him to all shortcomings. Straightway he discarded his apron and strutted along after Sandy on their way to the inn, quite oblivious of the oddity of his appearance.

Not so, as it proved, were the bystanders. Passing a group of boys playing in the street, the pair were assailed by a jeering chorus.

"Hello, Bill, look a' that!"

"Where?"

"There, following the sailor-man!"

"What is it?"

"A monkey."

"A porpus."

"Say, mister, where 'd ye ketch that there thing in the jacket?"

Unmoved by this buzzing of street flies, Sandy stalked along, urging his companion to make haste.

Receiving no answer, he turned about. There, facing his jeerers in the narrow street, Zach stood at bay. So much jacket and so little boy have rarely been seen in combination. His belligerent attitude, moreover, added to the situation a crowning comical touch, which was fatal to all gravity. A roar of laughter greeted his movement. The mirth was excusable, but short-lived. Glancing around the circle and singling out the ringleader, Zach walked grimly up to him and slapped his face. Needless to say, there was a battle. Although his opponent was a bigger boy, Zach for some minutes held his own. Hampered, however, by his new toggery, he presently began to lose ground. Thereupon, Sandy stepped forward and helped him off with his jacket, saying: —

“There you be, Bub; now go in an’ lick him!”

Nothing loath, Zach rushed back to the fray; but at best it proved an unequal contest. The superior strength and bottom of his adversary became momentarily more evident. One circumstance alone put the issue in doubt: the way in which, after every bout, Zach returned again and again to the struggle, his face transfigured by the uncanny look of the born fighter, — a look none the less impressive that it is distinctively brutal, proclaiming, as it does, something within heroic or demonic, insensible to fear, incapable of surrender; something which, with ruthless ferocity, drives the worsted, maimed, moribund body back to fight it out to the death.

Sandy, standing by without thought of interference, heard a clock strike in a neighboring steeple.

Directly he bethought him of the business in hand. The sixty minutes had expired, and they were due at Bingham's. Seizing Zach, therefore, without ceremony, he dragged him away, saying: —

“Come, Bub, you've had enough of that, I reckon!”

Such an indignity was not to be borne by flesh and blood. Directly the young combatant turned with all his remaining strength upon the intermeddler. The latter, however, nothing moved, went striding on, holding the writhing, kicking, screaming pigmy in his forceful grip.

Arrived at the inn, they found a half-dozen horses standing saddled in the yard in charge of a couple of negroes. Men were shouting, and hurrying to and fro, and there was the usual bustle preliminary to a journey.

Presently Bollman appeared, followed by several sturdy fellows, with the air of frontiersmen, and the preparations were soon complete. The order being given to mount, the others sprang to their saddles, and Sandy more clumsily climbed upon the big, raw-boned beast allotted to him.

Zach, who on being released had thrown himself on the muddy ground in sulks, gave no heed to these preparations. Bollman luckily was too much pre-occupied to note the trouble. Thus Sandy was left to manage the matter himself, which he did with absolute wisdom.

Taking no notice of the sulker until the signal was given to start, he turned, as he slowly rode out of the stable-yard at the tail of the little cavalcade, and said, in an unconcerned drawl, —

“Good-by, Bub; give my respects to your marm ’n’ the schoolmaster!”

These tactics availed, for hardly had they gone a dozen rods when the repentant youngster came running after them, shouting at the top of his voice, —

“Stop! stop! Wait for me! Take me! I want to go. I will go-o-o!”

Sandy, lagging purposely in the rear, allowed himself to be overtaken.

“So ye think ye ’d ruther go, eh?”

“Yeah,” sulkily.

Without a word of admonition or upbraiding, the sailor reached down, and clutching the little penitent by the collar, lifted him like a feather into the pillion, where for a full hour he rode in shamefaced silence. Meantime, Sandy was busy taking note of his companions, and speculating as to the object of their journey.

“Queer sort of cruise, this is,” he muttered to Zach. “Blowed ’f I can make it out, Bub. It has a kind o’ privateerin’ look. Them scalpers,” nodding towards the frontiersmen, “look like Injun fighters. I never seen no Injuns, but I seen pirates enough, ’n’ the’ ain’t no great difference, I reckon. They ’re a murderin’ lot, all on ’em. Where ’s the rest of ’em, I wonder? This ain’t the whole crew. An’ this big gun, they talk about, — where ’s he? An’ this place where the land an’ the slaves an’ the cattle be, — well, Bub, we hain’t seen everythin’ we ’re goin’ to see on this cruise, yet. Never mind,” pushing down the hot ashes in his pipe with a calloused forefinger, — “never mind, I say; we ’re in

for it now, 'n' we 've got to take our chances. You jes' stick close to me, keep your ears cocked, 'n' say nothin'. It may be all right, but *I* don't like this turning away from salt water."

Moved by these ominous words, Zach began the journey with an ill-grounded feeling of distrust towards his traveling companions, together with certain undefined misgivings as to the end and aim of their mission.

As the road was none of the best, and they were indifferently mounted, their pace was necessarily slow, but quite fast enough, be it said, for Sandy and Zach, neither of them experienced horsemen. The frontiersmen rode side by side without exchanging a word. The negroes kept up an idle chatter between themselves, while Bollman, in a state of chronic perspiration, rode up and down the line, scanning the looks and equipment of his party with the eye of one responsible for the success of the expedition.

About noon, coming to a suitable place upon the roadside, he called a halt, and gave orders for dinner. All dismounted and took a hand in the preparations. Even Zach, at a hint from Sandy, made himself useful by bringing water from a spring hard by.

When dinner was over, Bollman, seeking out his new recruits, confirmed Zach's darkest forebodings by giving Sandy a pistol and a dirk to wear in his belt, saying significantly, —

"'Tis gut to haf dose. One knows never vat comes in de vilderness !"

The unconcerned look with which Sandy took the weapons, examined them, and stuck them in his belt, was not lost on Bollman, who walked away with a reassured air.

Presently an exclamation from one of the negroes drew attention. He stood in the road, pointing towards the town. All looked, but saw nothing. The sound of horses' feet, however, could be distinctly heard. Bollman waited in a fever of anxiety until the riders appeared around a bend in the road, when at once his face cleared, and he stepped forward with a welcoming smile. "Well, I'll be drawn an' quartered," muttered Sandy, studying the party with squinted eyes.

"What?"

"There 's a petticoat among 'em!"

Without finding any significance in Sandy's discovery, Zach examined the small party which came galloping towards them, with boyish interest. Colonel Dupeister rode in front, and seemed the leader and spokesman. A couple of attendants brought up the rear. Between these two detachments, as between a van and rear guard, rode a couple of whom one wore the petticoats which Sandy had described. Although the woman's face was closely veiled, Zach received, from her general bearing, an impression of youth and distinction. Withal his curiosity was so much excited that he failed to notice her companion, and only remembered him afterwards as a small, silent man wearing a slouch hat.

Meanwhile Sandy, who had been quietly studying the group, muttered aside, to Zach, —

"This ain't no Injun business, Bub."

"Eh, why? What makes you think so?" asked Zach, in a tone of evident disappointment.

"You see these grandees? Well, they 're mixed up in it some way. They 're bound for the same port we be. No, 't ain't Injuns, but I 'm hanged 'f I know wot else it is."

Further speculation was cut short by the movements of the party. Dupeister seemed to be taking leave; to some inaudible question of Bollman, he answered, as he turned away, —

"If you don't come up with us this side of Pittsburgh, we shall meet on the boat."

"The boat," Zach repeated, as he watched the little party gallop away until they were lost to sight in the windings of the road. "Shall we go in a boat, Sandy?"

"Lord knows, young un."

"Where is the water? Where can they put a boat out here in the woods?"

"In one o' them little ditches they call rivers, I reckon."

This talk was interrupted by the order to move, and they presently started on in the wake of their leaders. Nothing eventful marked their slow progress westward, yet day by day, as they fared along through the virgin forests, across the broad Susquehannah, and threaded the mountain pass beyond, a store of new impressions were made on Zach's receptive mind. Neither long nor wearisome to him seemed the three weeks' pilgrimage which brought them at last to the little frontier town of Pittsburgh.

The travelers looked about with natural curiosity as they entered the place. Zach dissembled with difficulty his great disappointment upon finding that the inhabitants were not Indians, while Sandy, viewing with unconcealed disgust the little shops, the mean houses, the muddy street thronged with dirty children and roving hogs, asked what could be expected of a place five hundred miles from the sea.

The river, when they came to it, proved a source of even greater chagrin. Although broad and deep, its turbid current, to a Boston boy, could not for a moment be compared with the clear and winding Charles, while Sandy would not allow that it was even composed of the same element as the sea.

Among the fleet of river-craft floating in the stream, the Doctor soon picked out the one belonging to his own party, and made a private signal for her to approach. Sandy stared with amazement at the strange structure, as she neared the levee, and having critically surveyed her from stem to stern, regardless of the presence of his companions, he broke into a loud guffaw.

"A boat!" he cried, "that thing a boat! 'T is nothin' but an old cider-mill on a raft. A boat!" he repeated, almost choking with unexpressed contempt. "Wall, it's the Devil's turn next."

Well might the odd structure before them have excited the contempt of a sailor. In point of fact it was not a boat, but an ark, or big floating house, fitted up with rooms for eating, sleeping, and cooking, all covered by a roof which served at need as a promenade deck. Its most striking peculiarity,

however, and one which completed Sandy's amazement, was the entire absence of any propelling apparatus, — neither oars, paddles, nor sails were to be seen on the Bouncing Bet. Upon inquiry he learned that craft of this sort were designed simply to float with the current, and were kept clear of snags and sandbanks by poling. His scorn of such navigation was so extreme that it was with much difficulty he could be induced to embark.

There was a delay of a whole day at Pittsburgh to give Bollman time to sell his horses and lay in a stock of provisions. Their crew, moreover, was reinforced by a squad of negroes, skilled in river navigation, concerning whom Sandy whispered to Zach the startling suggestion that the Doctor had "mos' likely traded off the hosses for the niggers."

They found the vanguard of the party already comfortably established on the ark, — the same five they had seen on the highway. The "Great Unknown" had evidently not yet joined them, for Colonel Dupeister still acted as leader.

At first there was a good deal of confusion, but directly they were under way, the Colonel set about a thorough organization of the expedition, in which he showed much cleverness. He made a roster of the men, inquired into their qualifications, and assigned them to duty accordingly. As before, his brows contracted when he came to Zach.

In the distribution of offices, the conduct of the ark was given to Sandy, and the negroes were allotted him for a crew. The new skipper was not elated at his charge, but it was remarked that the

bitterness of his prejudice against the Bouncing Bet somewhat abated when on the second day she developed a speed of eight miles an hour. And his feeling was changed to positive respect after one or two narrow escapes from snags and sandbanks, when it required all his own strength and agility, supplemented by the skill of an experienced crew, to bring them safely through. Henceforth, in his flings at the world, at mankind, and at life in general, the Bouncing Bet came off scathless.

On taking command the new skipper intimated to Zach, with an air of great earnestness and gravity, that he was to be worked in as mate. Forthwith the puny youngster swelled in imagination to the dimensions of the redoubtable Sharky. The duties of his office, however, as defined by Sandy, proved so light that there was left much spare time in which to observe his fellow-travelers. Very interesting they proved, too, that little group of cabin passengers, so unlike anybody he had ever known. As it turned out, moreover, he could watch them quite at his ease, for they were too busy to heed him. Indeed, he could by no means understand why they were so busy; morning, noon, and night they seemed ceaselessly at work copying papers, studying maps, writing dispatches, consulting and whispering apart. In their preoccupation they took little note of their surroundings, save as now and then the lady challenged their attention to some bit of scenery. Meanwhile, it was the lady herself who chiefly drew Zach's attention. Whenever she appeared on deck, he stared at her with might and

main, and for his infatuation in regard to her gave the following rather lame account to Sandy.

"'T ain't 'cos she's so handsome, — she's handsome enough, though, — it's the way she acts."

"Humph!"

"An' when she talks, you want her to keep goin' right on."

"Got the gift o' gab, I suppose."

"An' then the way she says her words" —

"Kind o' slip right out," suggested Sandy.

"Yeah."

"Yeah. I see one o' that kind once."

Withal Zach could not understand how the Colonel and the Doctor could neglect so charming a person, and spend all their time talking with the silent little man in the slouch hat.

In this Sandy agreed with him, and they were puzzling over it one evening after their fashion, when something happened, which threw an unexpected light upon the matter.

It was just after sunset. The boat was gliding smoothly down a long, straight stretch in the river, and the skipper and mate sat a little apart on the forward deck smoking their pipes, — yes, it must with reluctance be confessed that Zach had become a confirmed smoker. Having appropriated an old clay pipe of Sandy's, he had persevered through more than one violent attack of nausea, until now he puffed the rankest plug with the aplomb of a veteran. Sandy, considering it a proper and natural step in his development, looked on without protest. To them thus sitting, Dr. Bollman came forward for

a word with Sandy. He stopped aghast at sight of Zach puffing his old pipe.

“Bah-h-h! Vot you do here? Who teach you dricks like dot, hein? Let me never again catch you at dot, or ve send you home to de mudder to be spanked!” saying which, he plucked the pipe from Zach’s lips and tossed it into the river.

Unfortunately, the Doctor himself was an inveterate smoker. He was, indeed, rarely seen without his huge meerschaum in his mouth. Knowing this, and also knowing the place where the pipe was kept when not in use, Zach took an instant and signal revenge. Springing to his feet he hurried aft, seized from its shelf the precious meerschaum, held it for an instant aloft in full view of its pursuing owner, and then threw it far out into the turbid stream.

His triumph was short-lived. The next moment he was in the clutches of the incensed German, who, after a thorough shaking, cuffing, and buffeting, ended by hurling him violently to the floor.

There was a murmur among the lookers-on, who doubtless thought the boy’s bones must be broken. Great, therefore, was their amazement to see him jump instantly to his feet, rush upon his sturdy antagonist, kick him viciously in the shins, and bite his arm like an enraged beast, uttering all the time a volley of oaths which would have done credit to a past master in profanity. The startled German, gathering all his strength, again flung off his assailant, and looked about as if for a weapon.

Zach, meanwhile, rising as before, was about to

make another rush upon his aggressor, when he suddenly stopped as if petrified. Before him, bare-headed in the doorway, stood the little silent man. The stranger did not speak; he made no move to interfere; he only fixed upon the mutineer a pair of glittering black eyes. Zach had never seen such eyes, — calm, penetrating, masterful in their startling intelligence, — Zach had never before stood in a presence so imposing. He halted, therefore, spell-bound and breathless. In the interval, Dr. Bollman had time to take thought. He broke out violently: —

“Here! Vill you come here, I say!” he cried to a couple of the crew standing by. “Take you dis tam biting leetle animal, unt flog him vith de rope-end!”

Zach, still under the influence of the overawing stranger, was led away without resistance. He scarcely heeded the preparations made for his punishment, until aroused by a growl from Sandy. Still maintaining his lounging position on the deck, the skipper said with a quiet drawl: —

“I reckon ye’d better not lick that boy!”

The men looked over at the speaker. Nothing could have been more peaceful than his tone, yet one would have thought his hearers found in it some ominous significance, for they hesitated and looked blankly about, at a loss what to do.

In the moment’s interval a conference had taken place in the cabin, and presently came word that the punishment was remitted. The silent little man had evidently interfered!

Who, then, was the silent little man? They were destined soon to know more about him. In fact, the very next day, as Zach sat holding the tiller for Sandy, who was splicing a rope near by, he saw the wearer of the slouch hat appear on deck. After taking one or two turns up and down by himself, he stopped, and called out several times:—

“Theodosia!”

A voice was heard answering from within, and presently the lady appeared, whereupon the two walked up and down a long time, earnestly talking. Zach puzzled hopelessly over their demeanor, which was cordial, familiar, even affectionate, and marked furthermore, on the man’s part, by a solicitude shown in unconsidered trifles, almost paternal in its gallantry. As, for instance, when the lady, touching by accident a coil of rope, soiled her hand, her companion, as if dealing with a child, directly pulled forth his handkerchief, wiped her hand, and threw the handkerchief away. Zach followed the movement of the fluttering bit of cambric. By chance, instead of falling overboard, it was blown along the deck to his feet. He picked it up idly. It was not much soiled after all. Spreading it out on his knees he saw a name in the corner, — a name which he had heard in men’s mouths since he could remember, a name, too, which was associated with something great, but he knew not whether for good or evil. In his bewilderment, he stretched it out toward Sandy.

“What is it?” asked the skipper indifferently.

“’T is his name.”

“Whose?”

“*His*,” pointing to the stranger, still pacing the deck.

“Well, what is it?”

“Aaron Burr.”

“The Devil!”

Next day the vessel made her first landing. The sailing of the expedition seemed to be no secret in the country at large, for there was a delegation, a dozen men or more, waiting to welcome them. They came on board the ark. Burr introduced them to the lady, whom he called his daughter, and ended by making them a speech. Small in stature as he was, he somehow produced a grandiose effect, with his calm, stately bearing, and his grand cadences of voice.

Zach listened eagerly, but the wind blew the speech away, so that only bits of it came to him. Among these fragments two words, or rather names, so often recurred that he learned them by heart: “Washita” and “Blennerhassett.” As to these he gathered vaguely that one stood for an enchanted island, where the expedition was to rendezvous and gather recruits; and the other an El Dorado, where great things were to be done and great promises fulfilled, where all were to be made rich and famous, and revel in unconditioned bliss.

All through the night that speech rang in the boy’s ears. In dreams he heard again that sounding rhetoric and saw those gleaming eyes. To him, henceforth, the expedition was invested with a new

and dramatic interest, which centred in the person and doings of the new leader.

Nor was Zach the only one bewitched by that strange, magnetic personality. Hearts older and wiser yielded to the spell. That very first speech, indeed, brought not a few recruits, and the little party swelled apace as it floated on.

All pretense of mystery, as it seemed, was laid aside. There was instead a sudden assumption of frankness. It was noised abroad that the late Vice-President of the United States was making a tour of the Western States. Naturally, attentions were showered on him. Dinners and suppers and feasting and interchange of courtesies took place wherever they touched shore. On guarded occasions and to special auditors there were other speeches, too, through all of which resounded those magic words "Washita" and "Blennerhassett."

Again there were scraps of talk which the wondering mate could by no means make out, as when stanch old Colonel Morgan, at Cannonsburgh, came, escorting Burr and his friends back to the ark after a supper-party. Zach, lying in the shadow of the cabin, where he had fallen asleep while keeping Sandy company on his watch, was awakened by their voices.

"Growing, sir," said the Colonel. "We are growing like a prairie fire. This is to be the centre of this country, and by and by we shall see Congress sitting at Pittsburgh."

"Then it will be a Congress of your own, for in less than five years you will be totally divided from the Atlantic States."

"God forbid!" cried the old man, with unction. "I hope such a thing will never happen in my day."

"It will, it must! What can you expect of this shilly - shally administration? Without dignity, without intelligence, without force," — it was Burr who was speaking. "Why, with two hundred men, I could drive Congress, with your President at its head, into the Potomac."

"What, what, sir!"

"He is a poor old granny, and his Cabinet a Dorcas society."

"The country would rally to his relief, granny or no."

"Not a bit; it despises him and his goose-squadron. 'Rally'? let it rally! With five hundred men I could take New York city."

"I know nothing of New York, but I'd defy you to take our village with your five hundred men!" was the quick reply.

"Perhaps not." Burr forced a laugh. "'T is different out here. But, Colonel, we won't keep you waiting. Good-by! For this night's welcome I rest your hermit. But think of my words! Changes are coming. I shall not forget you. Good-by, again!"

"That brood is to be mistrusted," Dupeister muttered, continuing the conversation when he and Burr got on board the ark. "We had better have held our tongues."

"We can never get on, Colonel, by holding our tongues."

"But we may set these wasps buzzing."

“Let them buzz!”

Long and fruitlessly Zach pondered over this midnight talk, and Sandy's sententious comment on it only puzzled him the more.

“Th' ain't no Washita in that, Bub!”

But day by day, now, they drew nearer to the much-talked-of island. At Marietta, when almost in sight of it, they were delayed by a local celebration.

Directly it was buzzed about that Aaron Burr had arrived, a crowd came thronging to the levee, and the authorities sent to invite him to take part in the festivities. From his cordial acceptance, one might have supposed he hailed the interruption as a pleasure. He went ashore and reviewed the militia. The men stared at his knowledge of tactics. With Theodosia, he attended the grand ball in the evening. The women admired his grace, courtliness, and high-bred gallantry. Coming home, he parted with his escort in a gracious speech. Turning as they withdrew, he said something in an undertone to Dupeister. Zach did not catch the words, but he long remembered and puzzled over the strange smile on the speaker's face.

At early dawn they were again on their way. In a couple of hours they arrived at the junction of the Ohio and the Kanawha. There was a shout from the lookout, and all went rushing forward. With a flutter in his heart, Zach stood in the prow and strained his eyes towards the long-expected Eden.

In the glory of midsummer it rose before them: a long narrow island, standing midstream of the Ohio,

crowned by some noble timber, and framed on either hand by the thickly wooded shores of the river. New wonders unfolded as they advanced. Endless care and money had been expended to amend the wild slovenliness of nature by the addition of some of the fripperies of art: a garden gay with flowers, a spacious lawn adorned with shrubberies, a dwelling grotesque rather than imposing, suggesting a minic basilicon in form, with its middle structure and semi-circular wings connected by a corridor.

Approaching nearer, Burr gave orders to unfurl the pennant and fire a salute. Directly the compliment was returned from the island by a waving of flags and an answering salvo. Zach's breath came quick and short as they bore down for the landing, and such was his agitation that he could not join in the loud huzzahs which went up from the crew and those on shore, when Aaron Burr, like a destroying angel, leaped ashore on the enchanting island of the Blennerhassetts.

CHAPTER IV.

ALL unconscious as the turtle in the market-place bearing on his back the label "Soup To-morrow," Harman Blennerhassett strode forward, that fair summer evening, with a smile of welcome, to fold in his arms the man come to work his destruction, — the parallel is effective not only as a rhetorical flourish, but is warranted by divers sombre passages in history. Of a tall, slender figure was this island king, with stooping shoulders, a scholarly air, and a certain aquiliné stateliness of feature. An occasional broad pronunciation of a vowel, and a br-r-r among his consonants, bespoke his Irish birth, while his grave courtesy of mien told of careful early breeding.

Warned by the twofold salute of the approach of his guests, he hastened to meet them at the landing. Handing over their luggage to the slaves at his heels, he politely offered his arm to Mrs. Alston, and thus, with Burr upon his other side and Bollman and Dupeister bringing up the rear, he led the way to the house.

Arrived at the door, he paused. His guests were quick to take the hint; with one accord they cried out in admiration. It was indeed an outlook not to be neglected. Before them, the lawn, dotted with shrubbery, stretched away on every hand to the

water. Beyond, the stream, widened by its confluent branches, glowed with opaline reflections from the sunset clouds. Farther away, at the junction of the rivers, peeped from the thicket the little village of Parkersburgh; while nearer at hand the Virginia shore took on a purple gloom against the violet splendor of the sky.

The pause following the outburst of enthusiasm from the new-comers was broken by the sound of horses' feet.

"Ah," cried the host in a tone of relief, "here in good time comes my better half, just as I was about to make her excuses!"

As he spoke, a horse dashing at full gallop around the corner of the house was reined up with a vigorous hand at the very door, and the next moment a striking figure alighted with a bound in the midst of the group.

Dressed in a scarlet riding-habit trimmed with gold lace and a hat waving with ostrich plumes, she for a moment startled her guests by the unexpected brilliance of her attire. With a look, with a word, however, she straightway subordinated all this finery to its proper sphere, and irresistibly fixed attention upon herself.

From many-voiced tradition and from the only portrait known to exist of her, it seems that Margaret Blennerhassett had a tall, supple figure, delicate features, brilliant coloring, impulsive manners, and the air of an enthusiast. On the whole, making due allowance for overwrought descriptions, it is evident that she was a woman of unusual attractions.

Directly upon her advent the whole atmosphere of the party changed.

"Ah, Colonel Burr," — with both hands outstretched, — "I am indeed glad to see you. This I am sure is Mrs. Alston," shaking hands with Theodosia. "Madam, you are long expected. Gentlemen," bowing in answer to the introduction murmured by Burr, "you are all most heartily welcome to our poor house. I am rejoiced indeed to see you arrived. 'T was most tiresome, was it not, ma'am, the journey? I am sure you are quite worn out. By the same token, as they say in the County Kerry where my Blennerhassett was born, — by the same token, ma'am, I am going to carry you off straight-way to your room without more ado; the view will wait. Blennerhassett, will you show the gentlemen their quarters, — the right wing, remember! Gentlemen, a short toilet and small ceremony, I pray, for supper is on the point of being served. Shall we go, ma'am? Colonel, your most obedient!"

Thus admonished, the guests made their dress as simple as the meal which followed proved informal. Lack of ceremony, however, did not prevent it from being a veritable feast. The delicious food, after the sorry fare of the wilderness, was keenly relished, while the cordiality of their welcome was irresistible. The last barriers of reserve natural among strangers gave way before the impulsive attack of the hostess, supported as it was by the graceful ease and mental resource of her lady guest.

Naturally, the talk at table was the simple interchange of civilities proper to the occasion. It was

too early yet for business, for which, however, a growing tone of fellowship, becoming in those embarked in a common cause, was fast ripening the moment.

Burr, seated on the right hand of Mrs. Blennerhassett, showed himself a master in the art of saying apt nothings, and deeply flattered the eloquent lady by an attention which never lost a syllable that fell from her lips. It was only when she turned to bestow a word upon Bollman or Dupeister that he took occasion to steal an inquiring glance at his host, whose air of reserve rendered him a more baffling subject for analysis than his outspoken wife. As the event proved, no moment of opportunity was lost by the watchful guest, during that first tumultuous informal evening, for studying close at hand the widely differing types of character of this man and woman on whom the success or failure of his undertaking so much depended.

Left to their wine, the men lost something of their ease. The conversation so perceptibly languished that Burr perforce had to come to the front. Indeed, so soon as the need was apparent, he showed no hesitation, but led the talk with the practiced ease of a veteran tried in many fields of thought and action, — the bar, the camp, the rostrum, and the senate. If he knew how to talk, however, he also, as it appeared, knew when to forbear. There were more serious objects in view than shining as a table-talker. His host was still on guard. Having, therefore, fairly opened the ball, he set the Doctor astride his hobby and gave him the floor. The word

tyranny and its various synonyms were like so many red rags to the German doctrinaire. Artfully shaking one of these rags in the phrase "intellectual oppression," Burr stepped aside. Breathing defiance, the unsuspecting Doctor sprang into the field, and held it against all comers to the end. Happily, it seemed to make no difference to him that nobody heeded, understood his parallel between Martin Luther and Descartes, or had ever heard of "Wilhelm Meister," the book which he praised so extravagantly as marking an epoch in literary freedom. Although Burr alone listened with an air of attention, he made poor work of disguising a look of relief when, at the end of a long period, Blennerhassett, rising, gave the signal to join the ladies.

The ladies, seated outside on the gallery, were eagerly awaiting them. Directly a new interest was infused into the conversation; for hardly were all comfortably settled in their seats than, with characteristic impulsiveness, the hostess broached the topic uppermost in all their minds.

"Do tell us, sir," to Burr, seated at her side. "We are dying to know. What are your plans? Surely there need be no secrets here, for we are all embarked in the same boat, — but I see I am meddling. Blennerhassett is shaking his head."

"Do not regard him, ma'am! Such meddling will always be most welcome."

"But I fear me he is right. 'T is already late. You are tired. 'T was most stupid and ill-timed of me. Come, I have a better idea already. Blennerhassett shall give you a squint at the stars. 'T is

worth your while, too, I give you my word, for he has the finest telescope in the country, which, to be sure, is not saying so very much after all."

But Burr, glancing keenly from man to wife, chose for some reason not to avail himself of the proposed diversion.

"Pardon, madam, the stars are not like to run away. Business first, — the adage is musty. You ask about my plans?"

"Since you are resolved to indulge me, yes. But indeed, I feel quite like a child to be so precipitate. You may see me blushing. However, since you are listening in good earnest, you must know, sir, we are as yet quite at sea. We know nothing at all definite. We have only heard generally that there is somewhere — I declare to you I have n't the least notion at what point of the compass — this wondrous El Dorado. That is all. At last accounts nothing had been done, nothing decided upon."

"The reproach is just. The fault was my own. Pardon me that I have been so remiss. I am happy to say that latterly we have made great progress. Now everything is decided on, and much has been done. The Washita tract is secured!"

"Pray you now, sir, spell me that name!"

Burr gravely complied.

"The land is fairly bought, do you say?" asked the host, in evident astonishment.

"Bought," repeated Burr emphatically, "and part of the money paid down!"

"So!" muttered Blennerhassett, with a noticeable change of tone; "then the whole matter assumes at once a more practical look."

"By which I fear you have hitherto thought it Utopian," said Theodosia, a little archly.

"Right, ma'am, and so he did," interjoined Mrs. Blennerhassett, leaning across; "he has been as full of doubts as an egg is of meat. But I beg you now go on, sir," turning to Burr. "Give us some description of this place! 'Tis in the far wilderness, they say."

"Far enough, never fear," laughed her husband.

"So much the better. Was not this a wilderness when we came hither? and now 'tis a paradise."

"Ay," assented Blennerhassett, with a touch of bitterness, "and the best part of our fortune went to make the transformation."

"True," with a passing sigh; "but you must know we were babes in the wood then, ma'am," turning to Theodosia.

"And what wonder," broke in Dupeister. "You have surrounded yourselves here with the luxury of the Grand Turk."

"Which you will find, after tarrying here a bit, comes not amiss," rejoined Blennerhassett. "I cannot find we have a comfort too many."

"Ah, but such money squandered on senseless trifles," whispered Mrs. Blennerhassett aside to Theodosia, "and much of it my own fault, too, I confess; but," aloud to Burr, "for this tract, sir, where is it?"

"Bring forth your map, Bollman! The Doctor, ma'am, will show you. He is our cartologist."

Thereupon, nothing loath, Doctor Bollman brought forth a roll of maps and plans.

"First and foremost, what access have we to the sea?" asked Blennerhassett, blinking in short-sighted helplessness over the Doctor's shoulder at the remote map.

"'Access'! noding better," cried Bollman enthusiastically. "Ve shmell almost de salt vater. See! Look for yourselves! De Vashita empty into de Red River, de Red empty into de Mississippie, de Mississippie into de Golf."

"And the tract, the land, where is it?"

"Here, shust here, vere you see my finger! Four hundert tousand acre. Plantations for all, unt so many more as vill come, see?"

"And 't is already ours?" asked Mrs. Blennerhassett in a breathless voice.

Burr turned his watchful eyes upon her with a look of profound gratitude. Her tone was worth a folio of argument.

"Ours, madam," he answered, with effective reserve; "the bargain is made and the earnest money paid. A feature not to be overlooked in the matter," he continued, flashing a covert glance at his skeptical host, "is our neighborhood to the great market of New Orleans, and through that to the Antilles, and so on to Europe and the world."

Blennerhassett bowed with a non-committal air.

"Success is but a matter of a few years," went on Burr, quietly.

"Then gold, money — reeches," broke in the Doctor.

Burr submitted to the interruption with a look of gratitude.

"We 'll found a city on the spot!" suggested Dupeister.

"And call it Theodosia," added Mrs. Blennerhassett quickly.

Mrs. Alston smiled her thanks for this pretty compliment, as with a wave of her hand she recalled attention to the map.

The lesson in geography lasted all the evening, Bollman's elocution being supplemented by occasional statements from Burr, which although thrown in, as it seemed, casually, never failed of effect. With two such masters, the lesson proved deeply interesting. Not even the dullest could fail to comprehend anything so clear. In the cross-fire of questions and suggestions growing out of it, in the formulation all about him of golden fancies, plans, and hopes, it was noted that the host himself was gradually drawn from his conservative standpoint to a pitch of modified but appreciable zeal.

With a scarcely suppressed sigh of relief, Burr rose from the table and bowed low over the hand of his hostess as, with an impressive air, he bade her good-night. The evening had not been lost.

Next day, the Doctor's first care was to attend to the rank and file of the expedition. The negroes were sent to find lodgings in the slave-quarters on the island, while the white recruits were bestowed in an outhouse hastily fitted up as a barrack for their accommodation. Zach and Sandy, upon their own solicitation, were left to take charge of the boat.

Nothing more to their liking could have been devised. The ark had already begun to seem like home. Moreover, having it all to themselves completed the charm; with little to do and plenty to eat, with opportunity for rambles at will about the island, liberty to fish and swim in the river, there seemed nothing wanting to their physical content. Here, moreover, Zach seems finally to have shaken off his dread of the pursuing wrath of Master Tileston and Marm Dinely, and much it is to be feared that no shadow of remorse on their account clouded for an instant the serene conscience of the junior officer of the Bouncing Bet.

In their comings and goings, however, the skipper and his little mate soon became aware of some unusual movement on the island. They noted a constant bustle about the mansion; they heard inexplicable sounds by night which set the hounds baying and awakened loud echoes among the neighboring hills; they felt a stir in the very air. Not the least notable of their observations was the fact that Burr himself seemed ceaselessly on the wing. Up and away before dawn, he was absent for days at a time, returning covered with dust or splashed with mud; but for all the jaded lines in his face, wearing always the same calm, triumphant look.

It fell to Zach once to row the great man over from the mainland. Hearing the familiar signal in Sandy's absence, he had hastened to fill his place. As soon as the boat touched the shelving muddy bank, the passenger leaped aboard and placed himself in the stern, without heeding who was at the

oars. Seated upright with folded arms, his trim, military figure outlined against the evening sky, his brilliant eyes gleaming through the gathering dusk, he filled the wondering ferryman with such awe or admiration that, forgetting his business, he heedlessly lost overboard one of his oars. Ashamed of such clumsiness, he incontinently leaped after it, not counting on the midstream force of the current.

Burr, aroused from his reverie, promptly came to the rescue, and having picked up the floundering ferryman and recovered the oar, himself rowed the boat ashore.

The incident, slight as it was, proved memorable to Zach for more reasons than one, for when they had landed, the passenger, drawing a silver piece from his pocket, gave it to the little blunderer, at the same time carelessly asking his name.

Zach answered, blushing deeply.

The name seemed to awaken a remembrance. Burr, about to go, turned and cast an inquiring look at the speaker.

“What, are you the imp that threw away the Doctor’s pipe?”

“Yeah,” faltered the abashed mate.

“Humph! Yes, I remember now,” studying attentively the downcast face. “So Zach’s your name, is it? Well, Zach, you’re the kind of a boy I like. Some day I shall have work for you!”

Meanwhile the fame of the expedition had been noised abroad to such good effect that a steady stream of recruits came pouring in. The barracks had to be enlarged and others built. These new men

were speedily equipped and exercised in military tactics by Colonel Dupeister, and the whole island resounded with preparation.

What with all this moving of men and things the Bouncing Bet was naturally called into requisition. Having been fitted with a pair of long sweeps or oars, one day, as it happened, she was dispatched to bring a load of supplies from Marietta. There Zach, having been sent ashore to notify Blennerhassett's agent of their arrival, presently came flying back with some startling news, to wit, that fifteen large batteaux, capable of carrying five hundred men, were building in the neighboring ship-yard for the Washita expedition.

"Wall!" said Sandy, suppressing any show of surprise, "it's time they was doin' sunthin'. I'll tell ye another thing, Bub. Them boxes the niggers are wheelin' aboard of us now are full o' shootin' irons for the same business."

"Guns?"

"Yeah."

"Is there goin' to be shootin', Sandy?" asked Zach breathlessly, the possibility of a serious intent in all this military bustle just dawning on him.

"I reckon ther is, Bub."

"Who be we goin' to fight?"

"Redskins, an' them cut-throat Mexicans, mos' likely."

"P'raps they would n't touch us," suggested Zach, with a boy's primitive logic.

"Wall, we'd touch *them* all the same," retorted Sandy, with a belligerent chuckle. "They got to be killed, 'n' the quicker the better."

"But p'raps this is their own land, an' then we hain't any right to it," objected Zach with juvenile perversity.

"'Right'! Wot right have them snakes an' reptyles got to land?" asked Sandy from a good orthodox standpoint. "They ain't fit to hev it. They don't know wot to do with it, 'n' the only way is to kill 'em in the beginning an' save ourselves bother in the end."

Zach studied the speaker's serene face, and pondered long over this bloodthirsty doctrine. Planted in a soil so receptive, what noxious after-growth of action and sentiment may this seed not have engendered!

The news Zach brought proved well-founded and significant. The old peaceful times for him and Sandy were over. Thenceforward, as the ranks of the expedition swelled, and the buzz of preparation grew louder, the island became like a big swarming beehive. In the increasing need for communication with the main land, Bouncing Bet was called constantly into action and her officers kept busy. When not navigating the ark, they were employed on shore. In frequent errands hither and thither about the island, they saw much to puzzle them which nobody seemed able or willing to explain.

Perceptibly there brooded over all a portentous air as of the onmoving of some great dramatic action. Thought and effort were directed to one point. Though so little seen, a calm, masterful, directing hand was everywhere felt. To each one was assigned his duty. Blennerhassett, seated at his desk from

morning till night, wrote articles for the newspapers to stir up the people. Bollman collected arms and stores. Dupeister drilled the men, while the hostess, with tireless energy, seemed forever flying about, inciting, encouraging, and helping at every point.

Zach forgot his errands whenever she appeared. She was a character quite new to his experience. He stood aside and gaped in amazement to see her come flying over the fields by the shortest cut, jumping her horse over fences and ditches as she swept along. It never occurred to him as possible that he might make her acquaintance, and he was almost overpowered when, one day, in going her rounds, she came to make a personal inspection of the Bouncing Bet. Turning to go, after an examination of the vessel, she encountered the second officer.

"Mercy upon me! whose child is this? Where did you come from, little boy?"

Zach was quite too much taken aback to speak.

"Where is your mother?"

"Ain't got any," he faintly faltered.

"Poor child! But what are you doing here?"

"I 'm the mate."

"What does he mean?" with a glance at Sandy.

"Jes' wot he says, m'm; he 's all the mate ther is!"

"How came he here?"

"Shipped for the cruise along o' me."

"You 're his father, or" —

"No m'm; nothin' to him at all."

"I never heard anything so extraordinary. Why," turning to Zach, "you can't be ten years old yet!"

Zach shook his head.

"No older than my own Harman, and away from your home on this terrible — er — this perilous business. What will become of you?"

"Never you fret 'bout him, m'm! He ain't goin' to wilt or blow away. I fetched him along, an' I'll keep an eye on him!"

"Do! do, my friend! a constant eye. There may be dangers in store for him — for us all. And you, dear child, if anything happens, if you are ever in need of a friend, come to me! I, too, am going on the expedition. Come to Margaret Blennerhassett, and you shall find one!" and stooping, as she spoke, she imprinted a warm, motherly kiss on the sunburnt cheek of the astonished boy.

Zach started; he had never been kissed before, and the caress affected him like an electric shock. He turned and looked after the impulsive woman, and not even the halo and the wild-goose wings of the conventional angel could have invested her with a more glorified atmosphere than that which, to Zach's blurred vision, glowed about her as she walked away.

Sandy did not leave him long to his meditations. The skipper had a new distraction. On his last trip up to the house, he had brought back a newspaper which, they told him, contained one of Blennerhassett's articles. Here, then, it would all be explained; here the mystery at last be made clear. Coming forward with the paper in his hand, he eagerly called on his mate to read it aloud.

Zach read the article mechanically, and repeated

parts of it more deliberately at Sandy's request. Pondering the matter a long time over his pipe, the skipper at last broke out:—

"Washita! humph! Wall, now, that may do to talk to folks out here, but it don't fool me a mite."

"Eh!" ejaculated the reader, awaking to the fact that something startling had been said.

"Ef we 're on'y jes' goin' down there to take possession of some land we bought, an' lick a few redskins, wot do we want o' all these guns an' powder, an' all this muster business? *I* don't see, 'less"— Here he took out his pipe and squinted at the toe of his boot.

"What?" asked Zach, now thoroughly aroused.

"Unless there 's a rat in the meal!"

"A rat," repeated Zach, unacquainted with the adage. "What do you mean, Sandy?"

The wondering, excited look in his listener's eyes aroused Sandy's caution. He mused a minute, then abruptly changed the subject.

"They say them boats up to Marietta are mos' ready, Bub!"

Directly Zach swallowed the bait. This was the subject of all others in which he was most deeply interested.

"Yes," he cried eagerly. "An' I heard the Doctor talkin' to Colonel Dupeister this mornin' 'bout a lot more boats bein' built on another river."

"Where?"

"In Tennessee."

"Humph! an' all bound for this 'ere Washita," interposed Sandy, with a strange intonation.

"An' they say that 's what the — what *he* is gone off for."

"Wot? "

"To git men for 'em."

"Wher 's he gone? "

"The Doctor says he 's gone to see General Jackson."

The skipper sat bolt upright and whistled.

"What is it? "

"Wot is it, young un? It 's this: if Old Hickory gits a finger in this pie, he 'll make hell smoke! "

As all the world now knows, Old Hickory did get a finger in the pie, — a most incautious, blundering finger. Rumors came flying back to the island that he was hand and glove with Burr, and that the beauty and chivalry of the state vied with each other in doing honor to their illustrious visitor in every form of social homage.

What wonder that hearts swelled and hopes burned high among his associates on the island! Strange to say, amidst it all there came a lull in their preparations. For a few days all seemed at a standstill. There was much whispering and buzzing up at the mansion, and Mrs. Blennerhassett was seen to spend a whole morning walking up and down among the shrubbery in a retired part of the lawn, arguing, as it seemed, and pleading with her husband, while Bollman and Dupeister sat on the gallery anxiously awaiting the result.

Whatever may have been the subject of their discussion, the result was that next day a lawyer was sent for, and some merchants from Marietta, and

papers were drawn up and signed, in which the lady and her husband took part.

"It's money — money," said Sandy, coming home after a visit to the mansion, with a dubious look. "They'd run out; they could n't go on, an' they got the Square there to raise it on his land. They say he's signed away everythin', an' she too."

The event proved the shrewdness of Sandy's guess. Next morning work was resumed, and preparations pushed for getting the expedition speedily under way.

Presently, however, a new spirit began to appear, a spirit of caution and secrecy. There came a report that the United States Government was becoming suspicious, and purposed inquiring into the object of the expedition.

Directly the leaders took alarm. They sent secret orders for the batteaux, ready or not, to repair forthwith to the island. The order came a day too late. The batteaux had been already seized. Before the islanders had recovered from the shock caused by this blow, came the startling news that the President had issued a proclamation against the Washita expedition, and that a squad of Virginia militia was actually on its way to invade the island.

For a moment there was a panic, followed by the prompt resolution to hurry their little army aboard the few available boats and be off.

Night was already falling, and the darkness favored their purpose. Despite all haste, several hours elapsed before the stores and men were duly embarked. At last all was in readiness. The Boun-

cing Bet was to take the lead, and Sandy stood waiting for orders.

But orders did not come. There was an inexplicable delay. As precious time was flying, Zach was posted off to the mansion to see what was the matter.

Finding the doors open, he walked in. Listening, he heard a murmur of voices. Following the sound, he made his way to the drawing-room, where he came upon the whole party with their hats and cloaks on. He delivered his message to deaf ears. He repeated it without effect. Nobody heeded him. The occupants of the room, one and all, were gathered about the master of the house, who listened with a dogged air to their excited entreaties.

"Why, why, — give some reason for this change of mind!" cried one.

"'Tis a strange time to withdraw, now at the eleventh hour!" urged another.

"Think," pleaded his wife, "if you desert, it means destruction to the cause."

"Be it so," answered Blennerhassett sternly. "Wife, we have been cheated and played upon. We were fools to listen to that man. We have lost all, everything. Ruin stares us in the face. This he would lead us into is treason!"

"'Treason'!" faltered Mrs. Blennerhassett.

"'Dreason'!" echoed Dr. Bollman contemptuously, "vat, den, ees dreason? It ees to be a man, to go vere you vill, to do vat you like, to deny to bow de neck to dose fools yonder you call de government! Dreason! Bah-h! Vere, dell me, my fren', vould be dees contree, dis Ahmerica, if long

ago some ones dare not do dreason to de British tyrant, hein?"

"To stop now is madness," Mrs. Blennerhassett interposed; "now, when you are in very sight of the goal. It is to prefer failure to success, defeat to victory. Worse: it is to choose ruin. Yes, ruin. We have embarked all in this cause. We cannot turn back. We have nothing to turn to. We are bankrupt!"

Blennerhassett groaned.

"Harman, Harman," continued his wife, in a fresh burst of enthusiasm, "think of me! Think of your children! Up and away while time is left you! Leave this wilderness behind! Away to a brighter sky, to a more fertile soil! Away to those vast plateaux in that sunny land which await your ploughshare! A land flowing with milk and honey, — the land of the citron and the vine, the land of gold, the land of fortune and success! On! On, then! Why sit you here? On to the Imperial City, to the metropolis of the dazzling empire of the new world!"

The listener shook his head as before.

"Listen, Harman!" the speaker's eyes glowed with excitement, her rich voice rose in wild and thrilling modulations. "Listen, I say! Eight years ago we left England, unknown adventurers. Shall we remain unknown to the end of time? No! no! and again, no! The time draws on when we shall return in triumph, the proud representatives of a great empire, half a continent filled with millions of happy, devoted subjects: and on your arm I, —

I, dearest, the sharer of your trial and privation, shall be the witness and partner of your triumph!"

A clock struck upon the mantelpiece.

"Hark! do you hear? Time is flying, precious time, — time never to be recalled! Go, Harman! Go, my husband! Wait not for me and the children! Leave us behind! They dare not molest the mother and her innocents. We shall follow, never fear. We shall meet soon, — very soon, where they dare not pursue."

A noise was heard outside on the gallery. All started. Blennerhassett rose to his feet. A slave came rushing in to say that the soldiers were clamoring for orders. Zach, standing open-mouthed near the door, remembered his forgotten errand. Fearful that the Bouncing Bet might sail away and leave him, he hurried back to the landing.

The group in the drawing-room slowly followed. Folding a long cloak about her shoulders, half-leading, half-propelling her doubting husband, Mrs. Blennerhassett took her way with the rest to the river.

It was a lowering night. Deep snow covered the ground. A piercing wind sweeping down the long reaches of the river made the biting cold almost unbearable. The impatient soldiers had kindled a bonfire on the shore. Some of the leading spirits were gathered about it. Dupeister, Bollman, and the Blennerhassetts joined the group for consultation. Standing thus, their forms projected against the bright firelight cast long, spectral shadows over the untrodden snow of the lawn. Another shadow, un-

expected and unwelcome, presently joined the group, — a shadow which emerged without warning from the outer darkness, and laying hands on one of their number, cried: —

“I arrest you, Harman Blennerhassett, in the name and by the authority of the State of Ohio!”

There was a moment of inaction. Then the muzzles of a half-score muskets bristled before the bold intruder’s eyes.

“Forbear, men! forbear!”

The calm tones were recognized. It was General Tupper, the best-known man in all Ohio. A momentary silence which ensued was broken by a determined voice, —

“By Gott, but ve vill not forbear! Take heed to yourself, old man! Ve shoot down like a dog any-pody dot stand in de vay!”

The seasoned veteran recognized the ring of resolve in that answer, and stood aside without a word.

Was this action accepted as an augury by the wavering mind of Harman Blennerhassett? Who can say? Pushed on, as it seemed, by fate, in that brief passing moment he made his choice, returned mechanically his wife’s ardent embrace, filed on board the waiting vessel in the wake of his comrades, and sailed away forever from his island home.

CHAPTER V.

THE die was cast. Under cover of night the Bouncing Bet and her three convoys put forth on the turbulent river. The great expedition was at last under way. To go where? To do what? Never a man of them could say. The midnight sky was not more densely veiled from their sight than this comfortable knowledge from their understanding. Qualms, doubts, and scruples, like a cloud of bats, followed them on their darkling course, which, be it said, bristled with other perils than snags and sandbars.

Bollman and Dupeister, however, were no dullards. They had noted Tupper's manner. He had let them off too easily. Directly they were clear of the island, therefore, they called a council of war and passed along the warning for the crews to be on their guard.

Their suspicions, as it turned out, were justified. The wily veteran had indeed another string to his bow. A few miles down the river, that very minute, a company of Virginia militia were mustering upon a convenient headland to intercept them.

Luckily for the fugitives, these raw country soldiers had few ideas of discipline, but a large store of whiskey. Here was a time and place for a fine winter-night frolic. They made merry accordingly.

The bottle flew briskly about. The forest echoed with jest and song. Somebody rubbing his benumbed hands idly let fall the word "bonfire." The suggestion was hailed with shouts of approval. In a twinkling the fagots were piled, the torch applied. Little recked the boozy revelers that the flames mounting skyward sent at the same time a tell-tale ray far up the winding river.

The watchful fugitives failed not to take warning. Directly, every light on the little fleet was put out, every voice was hushed, and thus, hugging the shadow of the farther shore, in silence and darkness, they glided past their would-be captors, and before morning were far out of reach of pursuit.

For the time being the question of their course was simple enough. There was no choice of ways. It was merely a matter of floating downward with the current. A routine was quickly established. The officers from the other boats, assembled daily on board the Bouncing Bet, passed the time in endless discussion, wherein Bollman harangued and Blennerhassett gloomed and shook his head. The soldiers lounged and smoked; the crews for the most part did the like, for the river, flowing with midwinter fullness, floated them over snags and sandbars, and relieved them of the task of poling.

It need hardly be said that all these stirring experiences made a profound impression on Zach. Their midnight departure from the island, and subsequent escape, lived in his memory as stuff for life-long reminiscence. Thenceforward the expedition and whatever concerned it were invested with a new

and thrilling interest. For was not every day's progress an advance into a land of adventure and possible peril? While it may be an open question whether thoughts and emotions of this sort are a wholesome regimen for the youthful mind, it may be pleaded that in the case of Zach they had at least a marked ripening effect upon both intellect and character.

Amid all the mystery which surrounded their course and doings, one question overrode all others in interest. Where, all this time, was the commander? Day and night, in his waking hours, Zach pondered this riddle, as there came back to haunt his boyish fancy that military figure sitting in the stern of the boat, that cold, handsome face, those shining eyes, that inscrutable look, telling of measureless force in reserve, and of a calmness impregnable to assault. Over and over again those words rang in his ears: "*Zach, you're the kind of a boy I like. Some day I shall have work for you!*"

When was that day coming? Was it now at hand? What kind of work would it be? Or had these been merely idle words, a pretty speech, on the part of the commander? No! Zach remembered — could he ever forget? — the grave, searching look the speaker turned upon him as he uttered them. Ah! What would not the little dreamer dare! What had not many an older heart and wiser head dared and done under the witchery of those eyes! — darings and doings of which history has discreetly suppressed the tale.

Although some of these questions which bothered Zach were destined never to be answered, chance, meantime, threw a side-light upon others, which in a measure prepared him for the extraordinary events soon to follow.

Seated in the stern with Sandy one evening, the conversation turned upon river-pirates. The skipper scoffed loudly at the very notion. According to him, a fresh-water variety of pirate must of necessity be an abortive and milksop villain quite too contemptible to mention. About to argue the point, the mate was checked by a warning hiss and a raised forefinger. He stopped. There was heard a murmur of voices near at hand. It soon appeared that the triumvirate, seated over their wine in the little cabin, had opened the window to let out the tobacco-smoke; thereby unwittingly they enlarged their audience.

“Ah, but, my fren’,” the voice was easily recognizable, “ven a man haf some great ding in mind, he fly not like a cock upon de roof to flap vings und tell all de vorld.”

“Neither does he expect men to leave their homes and families; to spend their time and money on a wild-goose chase, without some clear understanding as to his plans and purposes.”

Sandy nodded his head in strong approval of this answer of Blennerhassett’s.

“‘Vild-goose chase’! It ees a goot vord! Ja, my fren’, ve fly away from dese fools, from dis tyrannee, from all dis stupid life, like dose vild geoses to de Golf — to freedom. Vy say you, den, ve haf

not clear understahnding? Vot ees not understood? Ve make all right at dis end, und Vilkinson at de oder. Ah-h, you forget him, den, dis grand Vilkinson yonder at New Orleans! He haf everyting ready: men, money, arms, provisions. He look every day to see us come. Ha, vait, den! Vait only, an' see!"

"Wait"! We have done nothing but wait. Our lives and fortunes are at stake, and 't is due to us that this absurd veil of mystery should be dropped!"

"Who is deceived?" asked Dupeister, somewhat contemptuously.

"I was deceived. My wife was deceived. My friends are still deceived. All this talk of an ideal community, this colony in the wilderness, — 't was a trick unworthy a man of honor!"

"But now that you know" —

"What do I know? What assurance have I of anything? What has he ever said, to commit himself?"

"You haf some eyes, my fren', you see for yourself! It ees not for a child, dis game ve play. It ees pretty big beezness. It make some day a great talk in historee. It bring you honor und gloree!"

"God grant it bring me not rather ruin and destruction! A more foolhardy venture was never made. With a few old mud-scows and a handful of men, to attempt to overthrow a great government!"

"Sh!"

"Softly! softly!"

"'T is the truth! You know it. What else is

aimed at but to fan into rebellion the discontents in these border States" —

"Mine fren', vill you only hearken to me?"

"To organize a revolution" —

"Haf caution vat you speak!"

"And while the United States Government is busied putting out all these incendiary fires in their own borders, to seize the opportunity, collect a troop of desperadoes, sweep southward like a tornado, and achieve at a blow the conquest of" —

"Madman!"

The slamming down of the window cut short the coming revelation. Zach looked aghast at Sandy, who wagged his head and solemnly clicked his tongue against the roof of his mouth. Before either could speak, the little party came forth from the cabin, the other boats were signaled to come alongside, and Bollman and Dupeister returned to their respective quarters for the night.

Directly, Sandy was called away to other duties, and Zach, having no one to discuss with him the puzzling things they had overheard, went reluctantly to bed, to dream of conspiracies and revolutions, and other long words of whose meaning he had very misty notions.

Next morning, all these nightmares were forgotten in the wholesome influence of commonplace sights and sounds. The blue sky, the brown river dimpling in the wintry sunshine, the solemn pine forests on either hand, spoke of nothing but peace. So, too, the human kind seemed in good health and spirits; the recruits idly chaffed each other over

their breakfasts; the crews whistled and sang in the forward deck, while at the helm, languidly sucking his old clay pipe, sat the imperturbable skipper.

Thereupon, the reassured mate dipped his rumpled head into a bucket of the muddy river water, dried it on a jack-towel, broke his fast on bacon and johnny-cake, and, filling his own pipe from the plug in his pocket, joined his comrade in the stern.

It was a peaceful picture he looked upon: the dark, silent forest on either hand, the placid river, the little flotilla borne steadily on as upon the back of some vast, slowly-writhing serpent. On board the boats there was a corresponding calm; the crews lounged on the forward decks, their leaders gossiped amidship. Thus far no accident had befallen them; there was not a man on the sick-list; all was monotonously well with the little fleet. Indeed, to tell the truth, the movement of the drama was dragging wofully. There was crying need of some stirring incident, and, be it said, the scene could not have been better prepared for it.

Thereupon, as if for once blind chance lent itself to histrionic clap-trap, the event bettered expectation. As they rounded, presently, a bend in the shore, the lookout on the Bouncing Bet uttered a warning cry and pointed landward. All eyes turned in that direction, and saw a man waving a white handkerchief on the end of a long stick. After a brief consultation, it was decided to bear down upon him. The colloquy that took place was short and stirring.

“Is Harman Blennerhassett on board?”

"I am the man."

"I have bad news for you!"

"What is it?"

"Aaron Burr is arrested for high treason!"

"High treason!" Zach repeated the words over and over to himself. What strange, new, and awful thing could they mean?

In a trice the report had spread to the whole fleet. The other boats made haste to come up.

"Who haf done dat?" broke out the inflammable Bollman. "'Tis tyrannie, rank tyrannie! Vere ees it? Vere takes it place? Dey shall put him in prison, hein?"

"Yes, he is now in jail."

"Eh? hear you dat? Come on, men! Ve go. Come on! Ve tear down de valls, ve get him out."

In obedience to this summons, Zach instinctively stooped and picked up a boat-hook, joining, excitedly in the burst of applause which greeted the Doctor's harangue.

The messenger on shore shook his head.

"No, no," he called. "Burr sends you word to observe the law, to do no violence, to go on in your course and never fear for him. He will join you, as he promised, at the mouth of the Cumberland."

"Ja, ja, ja!" said the Doctor, bawling after the departing envoy; "go tell him ve do it. Ve go to dot place. Ve wait. Ven he comes not right away to join us, ve tear down dat prison und burn in ashes de town."

Thereupon took place, on the deck of the Bouncing Bet, an informal consultation. Zach listened

open-mouthed to the unguarded remarks dropped by one excited leader or another in debating the question what to do.

Should they go on? Should they return? What confidence could be placed in Burr's promise to free himself? Did he expect to hoodwink the government? Had not events proved over and over again that his temperament was fatally sanguine? And to them — his accomplices — was not indulgent Fortune pointing out that very moment a loophole of escape? Should they not avail themselves of it, and fly while there was time? Should they go on and join Wilkinson, or stay and share the fate of their leader?

Needless to say, there was hopeless difference of opinion, and with councils so divided, no course was decided upon.

Meanwhile time and tide waited not. Days passed, each bringing nearer the issue; the river rolled on and bore them steadily forward to the appointed spot.

"Forward" — but how slowly! At their tortoise-pace it took a week or more to reach the mouth of the Cumberland. Arrived at this long-looked-for tryst, Zach was keenly disappointed to find it so humdrum in appearance. It is not clear what he had pictured to himself; doubtless he had expected to find it distinguished in some striking way by art or nature. This feeling, too, may have been shared by his elders, for they showed little interest or enthusiasm on arriving, and moodily brought the boats to anchor in sheltered places along the shore.

In accordance with a plan agreed upon, the next day a couple of trustworthy men were posted off to find the commander and bring back some definite news of him.

Thereupon the rest of the expedition entered upon a season of doubt and weary waiting, attended by very evident demoralization.

"What 'd I tell ye, Bub?" asked Sandy of Zach at one of their evening colloquies.

"What?"

"'Bout this 'ere," with a contemptuous nod.

"Dunno."

"Did n't I say 't would go to bits? Wall, it has!"

"Ho," incredulously.

"It's all up, I tell ye, — a dead hog."

"Jes' wait till *he* comes back!" retorted Zach, stoutly.

"Young un, look a-here! I'm goin' to put a live flea in your ear, — he ain't a-comin'!"

"How can he come, — don't you know he's in prison?"

"Is he?" Sandy clucked his tongue. "Wait 'n' see, that's all! An' this 'ere Wilkinson — d' ye know wot I think? Bub, I think th' ain't no such man!"

Accustomed as he was to the drift of Sandy's moralizing, Zach could not help looking troubled at this.

"No, Bub," went on the skipper, shifting his quid from one cheek to another. "We ain't seen the wust o' this by a long chop. He's got us out in

these backwoods, where all ther is fer a white man to do is to starve to death, an' he cuts stick. Jes' you hold on till the rations git low, an' ther 'll be some music round here ! ”

Sandy's growlings were stopped by the arrival of a bird of good omen. A large boat was presently seen floating past them amidstream.

Directly, it was recognized, and hailed with shouts of welcome. On the deck, smiling and waving, stood Mrs. Blennerhassett and her children. Having procured a boat from Marietta, she had loaded it with her choicest household effects, and followed to join her husband and share the fortunes of the expedition.

Never did languishing cause so need the tonic of enthusiasm.

Zach was on deck next morning when she came tripping forth from the cabin with the triumvirate at her heels.

“Pooh, pooh! I say. I'll never believe a word of it. Doctor, you astonish me! Colonel, I'm ashamed of you for such croaking. You've both been listening to my Blennerhassett, I know well enough. Trust me, I should have thrown myself in the river long ago, if I had listened to him. Never heed him! You hear, my dear,” turning to her husband, “what a character you're getting! Never heed him, I say! This storm will blow over. If only Wilkinson keeps his word, success is sure. As for Colonel Burr, my friends, believe me, that man was born to win! Come, now, I'll lay a wager with any one that he will be with us this day week!

What, no takers? Gentlemen, I have doubts of your courage! Colonel," sinking her voice, "do you complain to me of nothing to do? Why don't you set all these lazy fellows ashore — see, yonder is a fine bit of open! — and put them through their drill?"

Turning with these words from Dupeister to join her husband, the speaker came upon Zach.

"Ah, whom have we here? more old acquaintance. Are you not — sure enough you are — the little man I saw yonder on the island? What high office is this you hold, my dear? The mate, ah, yes. Do you hear, Colonel? let me introduce the mate of the Bouncing Bet, Mr. Jack — What's your other name, my dear?"

"Zachary Phips."

"Phips, to be sure. Well, Zach, I dare say you're a fine seaman by this, and I'm glad to see you safe and sound. Now you shall go aft and teach my own boys yonder to fish. Harman, dear, make room! here is the mate coming to join you!"

The ring of this cheery voice set a little chord throbbing in Zach's heart, and he felt an inexplicable thrill as the firm, jeweled hand rested on his shoulder. He yielded perforce to the old charm. His elders, be it said, followed suit at discretion. Nobody could long resist such kindliness, such energy, such enthusiasm. Thereupon the stagnant thermometer of the expedition mounted several degrees. Events, too, seemed to happen out of due course and probability for no other reason than to justify this irrational hope and courage. The mes-

sengers, for example, returned days before they were expected and garrulous with news, — startling news, news incredible and quite too good to be true. Burr's star was still in the ascendant. He had been tried — the great Henry Clay acting as his counsel — and acquitted. The country was ringing with his triumph. Balls and fêtes signalized his victory. Hastening to Nashville to join his contingent there, the whole city had united in tendering him an ovation; policy compelled him, however anxious to overtake his waiting friends, to accept the tribute. The time spent was not lost. Every hour brought more money, provisions, recruits, and confirmed him and his enterprise in the good graces of the people.

On the very heels of this news came the commander himself. Zach was washing the soap out of his eyes, early one morning, when he saw a line of dark objects coming down the tributary river. He pointed them out to Sandy, who put a glass on them.

“I ’ll be cussed, Bub,” —

“Eh!”

— “If ’t ain’t the other fleet.”

Zach thought no more of his soapy eyes; he thought only of Mrs. Blennerhassett, and of being the first to tell her the news.

Accordingly he ran to the cabin door and pounded with might and main, shouting all the time at the top of his voice, —

“Here he comes! Here he comes! The boats! See the boats!”

• An hour of commotion followed, in which guns

were fired, flags waved, and the woods rang with huzzahs.

The commander with his daughter came straight-way aboard the Bouncing Bet. The two women flew to each other as if with magnetic attraction, and Zach from his seat in the stern witnessed with wonder the ease with which Burr himself resumed his old ascendancy over the triumvirate.

Later in the day, Burr reviewed the fleet and made a speech to the members of the expedition, from the deck of the Bouncing Bet. Zach heard it all. He marveled in his boyish ignorance how such a little man could produce so profound an impression; could call up tones and gestures which so dignified the occasion. His words,— what could be more convincing? He called them a band of brothers, a band of freemen, who were leaving behind a poor, weak, tyrannical government, to go to carve out fortunes for themselves under better auspices. What a glorious future awaited them! What wealth, what honor, what fame! Perils and hardships there would be, but did they not expect them? Were they not ready for them? Was not the prize worth any sacrifice and endeavor?

Irresistibly, the old fascination made itself felt. Who could harbor in his bosom a qualm before that assurance so lofty and so calm; before that courage which had never been wanting in any emergency; before that whole heroic personality, freshly returned to them, crowned with the laurels of a victory gained over a weak and malignant administration?

The speech was received with great enthusiasm;

it seemed not to strike any one as odd that there had been no mention of Washita in it, or that in a harangue professedly setting forth the objects of the expedition, not a single definite word had been uttered.

Thereupon they got under way, — down the Ohio to the Mississippi, and so downward towards the Gulf. But under auspices how changed! No longer they stole along in silence and fear, seeing in every man an enemy and in every thicket an ambuscade, but with all disguise and secrecy laid aside, they floated amidstream in the blaze of noon, with banners flying, with shouts and laughter, challenging attention, exchanging visits and compliments with every wayside resident of wealth or distinction, boldly saluting the forts of the government, and hobnobbing with its officers.

Although the gayety culminated on board the Bouncing Bet, it seemed not to include the commander. Maintaining ever the same unbroken equanimity, he showed no elation. Zach never tired of watching him as he paced the deck, now disputing with the triumvirate, now chatting with the ladies. Wherein dwelt the subtle nameless air of distinction which hung about him, shown now in the impressive dignity which he employed with the men, now in the tender air of solicitude he showed toward his daughter, or, again, in the courtly bearing displayed towards Mrs. Blennerhassett?

If, to a more worldly-wise critic, these same fine manners might have seemed too invariably correct to be natural, too elaborate to be entirely honest,

Zach was incapable of such subtle distinctions. He took things as they seemed, and did not go out of his way to find any latent significance in the intent, admiring look with which the commander greeted Mrs. Blennerhassett of a morning, in the fact that he held her hand a needlessly long time when saying good-night, or in his habit of invariably lowering his voice upon the approach of anybody when they were talking.

Whatever the temptation, however, the commander allowed nothing to interfere with business. Neither did he spend all his time talking with the ladies, nor any preponderance of it on board the Bouncing Bet. He scrupulously visited all the vessels of the fleet in turn. He talked with the under officers, with the men, with the very negro boatmen. Thus, in due time, it came Zach's turn. As it chanced, Sandy had left him alone to manage the helm one evening. Burr approached, sat down beside him, and begged to be allowed to try his luck at steering. Affecting not to note Zach's embarrassment, he went on talking the while in an easy, friendly way, not to be mistaken for familiarity.

"So! Why, 't is not so hard. This, you say, is larboard. H'm-m! I might soon learn,— why not? So you are to be a boatman, Zach? No? You look higher? Ah, I thought so. You read and write? Yes, of course. Twelve years old. Eh, only nine? You are a big boy for nine. Nine, — so much the better, there's plenty of time to learn. You can't learn too much, remember that! Learn everything that comes in your way! Read all the good

books. The good books are the books which tell about facts. Then some day when your chance comes, you'll be ready. And it will come, it will surely come, my boy," rising and patting his listener's head. "Remember this, too," —

Zach looked up expectantly, and the blazing eyes seemed to pierce straight to his heart.

— "And remember that Aaron Burr said it to you: in this country every man is just what he makes himself ! "

It might, perhaps, be too much to say of that moment that it formed an epoch in Zach's life; but it is not improbable that the influence of the speaker's look and tone so emphasized the force of the truism he uttered, that not all the stormy events of his after life ever quite obliterated them from the hearer's mind.

Had Zach been but blessed with clairvoyant vision as he gazed admiringly after his hero that night, he would have seen suspended, by a slender thread, above his head an ugly weapon known of old as the "Sword of Damocles."

In their onward course the fleet came at last to Bayou Pierre, a small town thirty miles above Natchez. Hardly had they anchored off the levee when news came to Burr from a trustworthy source that Wilkinson, through treachery or panic, had betrayed him to the government; that the real purpose of the expedition was known, and that the whole country was ringing with the damning evidence of his treason.

Whatever may be thought as to his guilt or innocence, there can be no question that in this crisis Burr showed the stuff of leadership. With unshaken composure, he read the downfall of his hopes, and heard clanging in the air the knell of his great enterprise.

There could be no doubt that the end had come. He held in his hand the proclamation of the governor of Mississippi, charging him and his associates with conspiracy.

With a smile of contempt for the benefit of the messenger, he passed the paper to Bollman, and coolly ridiculed the charge.

But fine words would no longer serve. The governor was at hand. He summoned Burr to a meeting on shore. Without guard or escort the latter boldly repaired to the spot. His dismayed adherents saw him depart with a smile of confidence on his lips. Standing in the midst of them, Zach looked blankly on with a bewildered sense that something was wrong.

The suspense was short. News came directly that the commander was again arrested; that a grand jury was impaneled to indict him.

Remembering the triumphant smile with which he had departed, Zach held fast to his faith, and in answer to Sandy's croaking sneer, said only, "Wait and see!"

As there was nothing else to do, they did wait and see. Early next morning came tidings that, after a careful hearing of the evidence, the grand jury had failed to find an indictment.

The jubilation in the fleet over this report was quickly nipped in the bud.

A discouraging rumor prevailed that Mephistopheles, in the form of the renegade Wilkinson, stood back of the governor's chair whispering new insinuations in his ear. In vain Burr demanded his release. The prejudiced official held fast to his prisoner in spite of the fact that the grand jury, the judge of the court, and the whole community took sides with this victim of lawless tyranny.

The victim himself, despairing of getting the governor's consent to his release, chose to do without it.

Thus one fine day his comrades on the fleet were startled out of their apathy by the report of his escape.

CHAPTER VI.

THE joy on board the fleet over Burr's escape was not of long duration, for in a very few days came news of his recapture.

Those intervening days had afforded the members of the expedition opportunity for a little cool reflection. With one accord all recognized that the end had come. Their secret was disclosed. The government was at last thoroughly aroused. A resistless force blocked the way.

In his own fashion Zach felt overwhelmed by the blow. To his boyish fancy it seemed that a big, black curtain had suddenly fallen between him and a future glowing with promise. Instead of those hope-lighted fields in which he had been so long roaming at large, he now felt himself squeezed into a cramped, sordid, workaday present, where there was scant light, air, or elbow-room.

Dazed and helpless, he looked on and saw the proud fabric of the expedition fall to pieces like a rope of sand. He could by no means understand how it came about, or what it meant, or what had happened to make everybody so suddenly lose heart. Had not the commander triumphed over his enemies before? Could he not do it again?

He beheld, happy boy! only the outside of things. He knew nothing of those busy sappers and miners known as moral causes, knew nothing of the dry

rot of demoralization which had been already a long time at work on the flimsy substance of the expedition. Little as he saw, it was enough to make him feel ashamed of his fellows, for at the end there was a scramble for spoils which was at once brutish and quite human. Everybody seized what he could lay hand on and ran away. This does not necessarily inculcate the leaders, who had neither voice nor authority to stay the pillage.

The two women sat apart, unconscious of all this clutching and grabbing. Gathering up the feeble shreds and patches of hope left her, Mrs. Blennerhassett tried heroically to support her companion. At the instance of the down-hearted Theodosia, she made a futile effort to stay the panic. Her voice, once so potent, was unheeded. Even her husband turned a deaf ear to her entreaties, and sternly went on with his preparations to depart. For the first time in their married life he was the moving power. Summoned at last to go, she turned to leave the boat, when her eye fell upon Zach. He sat watching her with an ache at his heart. Upon the instant, dropping bags and baskets, she flew to him.

"Dear child! I quite forgot you!" folding him in her arms. "What is to become of you? Alas! what is to become of any of us? God in his infinite mercy only knows. I cannot leave you behind here in the wilderness. Harman," to her husband, "he shall go with us. It is little enough we have left, but — Blennerhassett, my dear!"

"Hold hard, marm!" Sandy at last broke in. "Don't you never fret about him. He ain't goin'

overboard yit. I fetched him out here, 'n' I ain't goin' to let him git stranded."

"True, true! I forgot. You told me before. I'm glad he has such a friend. Ah, keep him out of harm's way, my good man! Keep him from bad — er — companions," with a dubious look at the skipper himself. "Remember, he is still a child! Remember he has no mother! My dear," turning again to Zach, "'t is sad to leave you in this wild place, but," lowering her voice, "courage! Courage, my boy! This is not the end! That great man is not dead. He will triumph, surely. His great heart pants for a larger freedom, and he will gain it. There is time yet, and so, — so," she repeated with a significant glance, "we may meet again. Remember me. Remember what I say! Good-by! Good-by! May God bless and guard you!"

These were not mere words, they were facts; they lived in Zach's memory, not as predictions, but as truths, — truths by which unconsciously he squared his life, planned the future and gauged the past. In the long years of trial and privation which followed, in the years of blind gropings among baffling cross-roads for a way which would lead him up to some clear outlook upon life, how he listened for that summons! how he waited, ready at any moment of day or night to answer to that call!

Meantime the tumult of dissolution raged about him. Everything seemed coming to an end. Not until the next morning, when sleep had cleared his brain of bewilderment, did he fully realize the change

that had taken place. Of all the bustling throng of yesterday, there were left, besides a couple of negroes, only the Doctor and Sandy, and of the imposing flotilla only two sorry-looking barges as convoys of the Bouncing Bet.

This paltry remnant of the fleet represented Burr's especial assets. The Doctor, loyal to the end, bestirred himself to realize what he could on them. He succeeded in selling the negroes and barges at Natchez, and with his crew reduced to skipper and mate, turned the prow of the Bouncing Bet southward.

As the course of the river from Natchez to New Orleans is very crooked, they naturally made slower progress than usual, but having no cargo, they passed without difficulty other boats more heavily laden. One of these floated some hours alongside, and seemed disposed to join company. The watchful Doctor took occasion to scrape acquaintance with the skipper. Zach, who had never before fallen in with a Mississippi boatman, stared at the stranger with might and main. Tall, stooping, gaunt, and impressively muscular, his face scarlet, his eyelashes gone, his long, tawny hair crowned by a wide-brimmed hat which flopped about his face; his dress a linsey-woolsey jacket with sleeves half-way to his elbows, supplemented by trousers of Kentucky jeans, which reached but little below the knee, he was of a type not to be easily confused with others.

"Mornin', stranger!" he called out in answer to the Doctor's nod.

"Goot morning; ve make de road togedder, it seem!"

"Yeah."

"It might rain, you dink?"

"Naw."

"It ees cold already."

"Raw ez hell."

"De river makes itself very full dose times."

"Naw," squirting tobacco juice, "jes' takin' a long breath; she won't spill over yit awhile. Loaded rather light, ain't ye?" looking the Bouncing Bet over critically.

"Ve, — h'm-m. Ja, ve get rid of some dings at dot odder place."

"Natchez?"

"Ye-es; dot vos it."

"What ye ben totin'?"

"Hein?"

"Loaded with hogs, was ye?"

"Ja — ye-es;" adding to himself in an undertone, "dot vas no lie, God knows; hogs vith two legs only. Also, mine fren'," striving to give a turn to the talk, "dot ees fine maize you haf."

"Heigh?"

"De corn," pointing to the cargo of the stranger's craft; "how goes de price, now?"

"Seven bits dumped on the levee."

The doctor whistled and rolled his eyes in well-feigned astonishment. Having adroitly rounded one conversational snag, however, he kept on the alert.

"Seven bits," repeated the stranger; "an' goin' to climb."

"Vy ees dot?"

"Bad season, poor crop, rot, — mildew."

“Und de bad crop make de goot brice?”

“I reckon; but I say, stranger, whar’ d’ ye hail from?”

“Ve — h’m-m — ve come from — er — away up yonder, see?” waving his arm vaguely to the northward, “but you, my fren’, come from moch nearer, hein?”

“Right, stranger; I come from Kentuck, ’n’ a right good place to hail from. Ye goin’ to load up down below?”

“Dis boat? No, I load it never again!”

“Don’t say? Nothin’ the matter with her?”

“Noding; she ees like a nut, so sound.”

“Humph! she ain’t bad lookin’. What d’ ye ask for her?”

“A song vot you sing, — noding at all; dirt cheap. If you want a boat, now, my fren’”—

“Naw, naw, I don’t. Thunder! I got boats enough. But, I say, come aboard here. Les’ have a drink. How old is she?”

“Seex — five — er — four — how do I know? look for yourself.”

“Come aboard! Come aboard, I say,” putting over his helm as he spoke so as to come alongside. “Ther bein’ nary thing else to do, we mought strike a trade!”

The Doctor, nothing loath, stepped aboard, and disappeared with the stranger into his little cabin, where they remained haggling over their tin cups of whiskey for a matter of two hours.

Zach and Sandy, left to themselves, had a conference.

"Is he goin' to sell the Bouncing Bet, Sandy?"

The tone was one of dismay.

"Seems likely, Bub," coolly answered the skipper, as he grazed an ugly snag.

"What shall we do, then?"

"Trust to luck, young un, as we did afore."

Zach did not look reassured. After pondering the matter, he presently suggested, —

"P'raps, 'f that man buys her, he 'll take us too."

"No, he won't, Bub; he won't *git* us. I 'm through with this river business. It 's too squeez-in'; th' ain't room enough; it 's like a bead slidin' up an' down a string."

Zach was silent. Clearly, he did not agree with the skipper.

"No, Bub, you keep your upper lip out o' pucker. We 'll find su'thin' or other, but no more o' this kind o' foolin'!"

Again Zach held his peace. How could he ever make Sandy understand that the expedition, whatever its outcome, had been to him the beginning of life; had opened to him untrod fields of thought and fancy! had taught him new words and things; big words, standing for mighty things,— the world, mankind, freedom, destiny; had stirred within him strange yearnings not to be put into language!

"Shall we have to run away when we *git* there, Sandy?" he asked, with a very vague notion of the rights of a free-born American citizen.

"Git whar!"

"Noo Orle'ens."

"No, Bub, we 'll walk away, an' ez slow 's ye like, but not afore this ere one comes down with the rhino; we don't h'ist anchor 'thout rations aboard another time."

The afternoon was half spent when the Doctor came back to his own quarters. His face wore a look of satisfaction. He muttered to himself, and, returning to the cabin, he spent an hour poring over the accounts.

Meantime the boat, gliding on its way, arrived within sight of the Crescent City. Zach's cry of announcement brought out the Doctor, who, assuring himself that they were indeed at last within view of their destination, thought wise to prepare his crew for the coming separation.

"Vell, boys, ve get here, hein? De eggsbedition for dis time come to an end. Ja, 't is true, 't vos bad luck ve had. Ach, *lieber Gott*, awful bad! It ees not den my fault, see you? I lose all my time, all my vork, all my money. I see everyting ready to fly away, und I plead mit dose odders; I pray dey shall haf some reason, dot dey shall wait. But you haf see; dey listen to noding. Dey run away home, und all goes to pieces. How, den, tell me, my fren's, can I keep to you dose promises I make 'bout dot land 'n' dose odder tings, hein?"

"Devil take the land 'n' the promises. Gimme my wages, that 's all I want, 'n' I don't ask no odds then o' anybody," said Sandy gruffly, suspecting a coming default of payment.

He was mistaken. The Doctor promptly paid him the full amount due, and when the boat reached

the levée, bade them a kindly good-by, adding, as a final warning, —

“St! Ven ve keep dis vild leetle animal,” tapping the end of his tongue, “shut up in de cage, ve get not so much into mischief, hein?”

Very different from the stately city of to-day was the shabby, irregular little town of New Orleans which greeted Zach’s wandering eyes as, having taken a fond parting look at the Bouncing Bet, he turned to follow Sandy along the levee. Although it had been already for two years under the dominion of the United States, it was still to all intents and purposes a foreign town, its populace a jumble of nationalities, and its life signalized by a bewildering variety of languages, customs, types of character, styles of garb, and forms of address.

Naturally enough, as the most characteristic feature of the town, Zach’s attention was first drawn to the levee. The sights there proved odd and novel to the little Yankee. Chief among these were the boats. Lying sluggishly in a straggling row along the batture, with their noses stuck into the soft mud, were scores of long, black, crocodile-looking rafts, covered by a raised scantling to protect their cargo, and furnished with no motive power save a long oar at the stern and two pieces of timber projecting like fins from the sides, to serve in a rude way as paddles. Loaded with fruit, vegetables, poultry, lard, coarse hay, and live hogs, all lying side by side, steaming in the sun, and sending forth a richly-compounded and sickening stench, they presented

a feature of commercial wealth and enterprise not to be forgotten.

The levee had other features calculated to keep Zach agape. These were the piles of merchandise. He had not dreamed there could be so much upon earth: pork without end, flour by the thousand barrels, cotton in mountainous heaps, dumped bale upon bale on the muddy batture for the wind to blow over, the rain to pour upon, and the hot, scorching sun to burn, until bagging and binding-cord rotted and fell away.

Well might the new-comers stare at all this wealth brought from some mysterious source, which Sandy vaguely called "up North," by the down-rushing river, to be piled up in overwhelming profusion here at its mouth for all the world to come and gather.

The day is on the wane. With the sunset hour the levee takes on another aspect. The muddy river gleams like a golden scarf between its verduring banks; the hum of commerce grows feebler; a slight breeze blows up from the Gulf; and, as the din of day grows fainter, the cathedral bells begin to chime. It is the call to vespers. Directly; the flags of every nation, English, French, Spanish, Dutch, Danish, Swedish, Russian, are run up to the mast-head.

The sun gone, it grows rapidly dark, for there is no twilight. Still the wondering pair stroll on, while the stars begin to glimmer above their heads and the round moon rises red and full over the distant bayous. On they go, bewitched by these

strange foreign sights and sounds: the negroes singing their droll French and Spanish songs; the show-boxes, furnished forth with a glittering store of watches, chains, gewgaws, pistols of every form and size, and murderous bowie-knives.

One of these last caught Sandy's eye, and he stopped to barter for it. With its blade twelve inches long, its edge perfect as a razor, its point curved and hollowed at the back, designed to cut both ways, with its heel broad and thick and heavy, it was indeed a weapon to make one shudder. Zach laid it down with an uncomfortable feeling, and noted with wonder the look of regret in Sandy's face that he could not buy it.

Passing up a street which led into the heart of the town, they came upon a building lighted as brightly as was possible in those days of oil and tallow. A placard affixed to the façade bore in large letters the word "Marionettes." The subjoined text being in French, Zach could not make it out, and turned to his companion for an explanation. Sandy shook his head.

At that moment the crowd began to pour out of the little theatre. The performance was over. Zach and Sandy stepped aside to make room. Presently, in the midst of the throng, Zach heard a childish voice ask the very question which had just dropped from his own lips.

"What are Marionettes, papa?"

Turning, he saw a little girl holding by the hand a tall, middle-aged man, and followed by a negro nurse.

"Marionettes, my pet, are a kind of people very much like human beings, only with much more sense and politeness."

Puzzling over this answer, Zach glanced up at the speaker's face. As seen in the uncertain light, it was severely grave.

"Oh, papa, look, — see!" broke forth the child, pointing to an old negress selling flowers. "Get me some!"

Tossing a coin mechanically into the old woman's tray, the gentleman chose the finest nosegay and handed it to the child, who, in running back to show it to the nurse, lost off her hat. Thrust forward by a pressure from behind, Zach set his muddy foot full upon it. Covered with confusion, he picked it up and handed it to the little owner with a muttered apology.

"You bad, naughty boy," cried the child, looking at the soiled headgear in disgust. "You have spoiled my new hat. I will never, never wear it again!" saying which she tossed it under the feet of the passing crowd. Her father, looking back, saw the movement, but made no remark. He quietly took out his handkerchief and tied it about her head.

"How funny you will make me look, papa! Mimi, Mimi, see what papa is doing! Oh, it will make all the people laugh. Now, Mimi, you may carry the flowers till we get home. No, no, don't you take my hand! Papa must!"

The father indulgently held out his hand.

"Now, Mimi," continued the little autocrat, "you must walk in front of us so I can see the flowers."

The docile nurse went on as she was told.

"Please, papa," was the next request, "I am tired. Won't you carry me?"

Without a word the stranger picked up the weary little lady, who, as she nestled down upon his shoulder, asked sleepily, —

"Dear papa!"

"Yes, darling."

"Will you take me to see the Marionettes some other time?"

"Yes, pet, as many times as you like."

Spellbound by this talk and byplay, so different from domestic scenes in Salutation Alley, Zach stood gazing after the strangers until they were lost in the crowd. Mechanically, then, he followed the yawning Sandy back to the levee, where, with other vagrants, they found a bed among the cotton-bales.

CHAPTER VII.

ALTHOUGH next day was Sunday, when all the world takes, as matter of right, an extra morning nap, Zach and Sandy were stirring betimes. It was indeed Hobson's choice with them, for the sun glared so fiercely in their sky-turned faces that they were glad to be up and away.

For want of anything better to do, they wandered about the town. It proved to be quite unlike any place they had ever seen. The narrow streets were not only abominably muddy, but they abounded in holes and ruts, and were bordered on either side by gutters half filled with stagnant water, into which each householder thought himself privileged to fling what filth he would.

The houses, too, were odd and not wholly prepossessing. They were for the most part of Spanish type; low, unpainted, one-story buildings, blackened from exposure to the weather, with moss-grown roofs jutting out over the footpaths below. During the day, moreover, they had a gloomy, prison-like air, owing to the jealous Spanish custom of keeping doors and windows tightly closed; but at night, as Zach afterwards discovered, they had quite another aspect, when the heavy wooden shutters stood ajar, and glimpses of the bright, peering eyes, jeweled hands, and waving fans of the Spanish beauties

within excited the admiration and curiosity of the passers-by.

Wandering, chance-led, the two new-comers arrived presently at the market, then as now one of the marked features of the city.

It stood in the heart of the town, a near neighbor to the cathedral and the Hotel de Ville, and over against the Place d'Armes, — a large patch of greensward planted with oranges, lemons, myrtles, roses, and jessamine.

Early as it was, business had already begun. Strange sights and sounds abounded on every hand, of which to Zach the humanity was the drollest part. The negroes especially delighted him. He laughed aloud at the little pickaninnies, with their bare legs, ragged straw hats, roguish eyes, and French lingo. He stared in awe at the wenches, with their towering turbans and dangling earrings, sitting so majestically amidst their heaps of poultry, vegetables, flowers, sweet herbs, and honey.

The fruit-stalls next awakened his admiration. With what tropical lavishness they were loaded, and what a luscious odor hung about them! Gazing, his bosom swelled with a retrospective regret, as he thought of the weary hours he had wasted robbing the sour-apple orchards of the North End. But, outdoing all these things, fine as they seemed, were the venders of monkeys, lap-dogs, and parrots, who invariably held Zach speechless and fascinated until Sandy drew him forcibly away.

The first little shock which he had felt on finding the market open on Sunday soon passed away.

Indeed, what with the hurly-burly and the babel of languages, no one impression had a chance to gain lodgment in his mind save, perhaps, a lasting surprise as to how all these folks understood each other, for no two seemed to be speaking the same tongue, and there was scarcely a word of good honest English amongst it all.

Thanks to these varied diversions, the time slipped quickly by, and the morning was nearly half spent when a savory odor near at hand reminded the pair that they had not breakfasted. Turning about they found themselves before the stall of a fat negress selling hot sausages and potatoes. Noting with experienced eye the hungry look in their faces, she hailed them.

“Ici, Mess’rs! les saucissons, pour les deux? Bien! Pommes-de-terre chaudes. C’est ça! V’la! Mangez!”

After breakfast they sauntered over to the Place d’Armes to smoke their pipes there. As they lay upon the grass, the chimes, beginning to ring, drew their attention to the cathedral. Although the most considerable building in the town, it was far from imposing, and, on the whole, rather a mean-looking structure. Seeing the doors open and the people going in, Zach felt a sudden desire to take a peep at the interior. Leaving Sandy to his pipe, therefore, he traversed the Place, crossed the street, mounted the long flight of stone steps, and made his way in. His curiosity was quickly satisfied; save for the altar, it proved quite as bald and bare as the meeting-houses at home.

Having no desire to stay through the service, he turned to come away, but found it not so easy as going in. A throng of persons had already arrived, and the vestibule was crowded. By dint of pushing, however, he at last reached the street, where, having forced his way through a procession of nuns who stood waiting to file into the cathedral, he found himself again at the entrance to the Place d'Armes. There, in the gateway, looking about with a dazed expression, stood the little girl whom he had seen at the Marionettes.

With a look of interest, Zach stopped to observe her. She was dressed with much elegance, and, mite as she was, had an indefinable air of distinction. Doubtless it was this suggestion of something about her foreign to his own experience which riveted Zach's attention. The child, meanwhile, with increasing dismay, stood looking this way and that, crying constantly, —

“Mimi! Mimi! Come here, Mimi! Stop hiding, naughty Mimi!”

Zach looked about to discover the teasing or neglectful nurse, but she was nowhere to be seen. Whereupon, approaching the child with an awkward air, he asked, —

“What's the matter, little girl!”

The child looked at him without recognition. Zach breathed freer and proceeded with more confidence.

“Are you lost?”

“No. Mimi's lost.”

“Where did Mimi go?”

"Over there!" pointing to the market still crowded with loungers.

"Come with me and we'll go find her!" said Zach, offering his hand.

Raising again her tearful eyes, the child bent one inquiring look upon her new friend, and directly put her soft, velvety palm in his rough hand with an air of complete confidence.

Zach on his part looked down upon the little creature who had so trustingly put herself under his guidance with the proud, protecting air with which he might have regarded a beautiful bird which had come to perch upon his finger. Carefully he chose the cleanest place to cross the street; scrupulously he guarded the delicate figure from contact with the jostling crowd, as they threaded their way in and out among the booths and stalls of the market, demanding meanwhile of every intelligent-looking negress news of Mimi. With one accord, they all shook their heads, or answered in their French jargon, which he could not understand.

Having thoroughly searched the market to no purpose, they took their way back to the cathedral, where the service was already over and the congregation dispersed. Bethinking him, then, of Sandy, Zach led his charge over to the Place, and found his shipmate asleep on the very spot where he had left him.

"Wall, what 's up?" asked the skipper on being aroused.

"This little girl" —

"Hello! wher 'd ye pick *her* up?"

"She 's lost, and we got to find her folks."

Sandy yawned again and reflected.

"Wher d' ye live, sissy?"

"I live at Basswood."

"Sho!" commented the skipper, with a puzzled look. "Basswood, eh?"

"That 's my papa's place."

"Wall, they forgot to put thet down in my g'ography, so I reckon the best thing we can do, Bub, is to go to the mayor's office."

No better plan suggesting itself, the three set off, and by dint of repeating *mare* to every intelligent-looking person, arrived in time at the house of the chief magistrate.

The official residence proved to be a typical specimen of the better sort of Spanish dwellings. The ground floor was occupied by the horses, the next above by the hay-mows, while the third, or upper story only was reserved for the owner himself.

As the mayor had not yet returned from mass, they were given seats in his office. A half hour passed, and a step was heard upon the stairs; presently the door opened, and there appeared the man whom Zach had seen at the Marionettes. Before the new-comer had time to speak, the child threw herself into his arms with a cry of delight.

"Papa, oh, papa, I 'm so glad you 've come, for I 'm lost. Mimi lost me; and this good little boy, he found me and took me here; and this other man," pointing to the skipper, "he 's a friend of the little boy, and he came, too."

The look of concern with which the stranger en-

tered the room quickly gave place to one of relief when he beheld his child alive and well. Taking her in his arms, he looked her all over with careful scrutiny as if to assure himself that she had suffered no harm, listening perfunctorily the while as she told again and again, with infantile persistence, of her visit to the market and the Place with the good little boy.

"And so this is the good little boy?" said the stranger at last, turning towards Zach and speaking with an English accent, which somehow seemed to accord especially well with his indifferent, half-indolent manner.

"I am greatly obliged to you, my lad," he went on, in a tone of quiet condescension which was not without impressiveness, "greatly obliged, I am sure, for the care you took of my little runaway. She was very fortunate to fall into such good hands."

Drawing from his pocket, as he spoke, a piece of money, he made a move to slip it into Zach's hand. To his boundless astonishment, a hot flush overspread the face of the boy, who snatched his hand away, leaving the coin to fall to the floor.

"Don't be a fool, Bub!" put in Sandy. "Don't ever refuse to take hard money when ye can come by it honest!"

"Take it, you, then!" said the stranger, pointing to the coin.

"No," said the skipper promptly, "'t war n't meant for me, an' I hain't done nothin' for it."

Meantime, Zach, who had edged towards the door, made a sign to Sandy, and lifted the latch.

Directly, the child, springing from her father's lap, ran to intercept him.

"Don't go away! Don't go, little boy! Tell him not to go, papa!"

"Wait a bit, my lad!" said the stranger, in the tone of one used to being obeyed.

"Make him come home with us, papa!" whispered the little girl, as she climbed again upon her father's knee; "I want him to play with me."

The words seemed suggestive to the stranger, for after a minute's silent scrutiny of the pair before him, he suddenly exclaimed, —

"You are sailors, my men?"

"Wall, gin'rally speakin', you're pooty near right; but jest now we ain't much o' anythin'," answered Sandy.

"You are out of work, then?"

"Yeah; an' on the lookout for a job."

The stranger mused for a minute.

"Are you competent to sail a vessel?"

"I reckon; anythin' from a man-of-war to a mud-scow."

"Humph! Can you bring me a good character from your last sailing-master?"

"No, mister, I can't bring you no character from anybody in this port. I hain't got nothin' to say 'bout how we come to be here, neither. The man thet takes us 'll hev to go by looks an' trust his luck, an' ef he ain't willin' to do thet, ther's no use talkin'."

Rather favorably impressed, as it seemed, by this blunt confession, the stranger studied the pair with renewed attention.

"I don't see but that you would answer my purpose," he pursued, as if thinking aloud. "I am building a yacht at my plantation in Lake Pontchartrain, and shall need somebody by and by to sail her. If a larger crew is necessary, we can always work in one or two of the slaves."

Zach stood waiting in anxious suspense, while Sandy coolly pondered the matter.

"How big is thet ere lake o' yourn, cap'n?"

"Forty miles long and half as many wide, in round numbers."

"Humph!"

It was another case of fresh water. Sandy was not enthusiastic. The fact that he hesitated, meanwhile, had the natural effect of making the stranger more desirous of getting him.

"Come for a month, at any rate, and make a trial of it!" he urged, as he got up and looked at his watch.

"All right, cap'n, thet 's fair, an' I guess we 'll do it; d'ye hear, Bub?"

Zach let his silence be taken for consent as he stood with the latch in his hand, listening to an eloquent description of Basswood from the little girl, while her father wrote some directions on a card.

"If you are of the same mind to-morrow morning, come to me at that address," said the stranger, handing the card. "We set out for home directly after breakfast, and you shall go with us."

CHAPTER VIII.

EARLY next morning, Zach and Sandy betook themselves to the tavern where their new employer lodged. They found him at breakfast with his little daughter, who was perched in a high chair by his side.

He greeted them civilly, without neglecting the orange he was eating, and contrived to give them the necessary directions for their approaching journey, without for a moment interrupting his table-talk with the loquacious little body at his side.

“Understand, then: you meet us at the landing,” he repeated, as they turned to withdraw. “We go by the Carondelet canal, on account of the luggage. If you do not loiter on the way, you may be there before us, and help François, my valet, put the things aboard the boat.”

“All right, cap’n — but who” — Sandy stopped and scratched his head.

“True; I am Mr. William Falconer, at your service, and this is my daughter, Miss Sylvia.”

The child got down from her high chair and gravely curtsied; then, taking two oranges from the table, she presented one to Sandy and the other — noticeably the larger — to Zach, saying, —

“I am glad you are coming to live at Basswood, for then you can see our new boat, — it is named

after me. You 'll like to live at Basswood the best of anywhere you ever, ever lived in the world!"

The party duly met at the landing, and embarked on the clumsy and not over-clean canal-boat. Mr. Falconer's warning to his new recruits that they would find the journey tedious proved well founded; floating through the sluggish canal in the wake of the tow-horses was the slowest form of water travel that Sandy had ever experienced. The situation, in fact, proved quite beyond his reach of criticism. He sat gazing at the stagnant water with a look of settled melancholy, save when by chance he raised his eyes and caught sight of the plodding tow-horses driven by a lazy, bare-legged negro, when, hitching in his seat, he swallowed the expletive which rose to his lips, as something altogether inadequate to the occasion.

His discontent, however, speedily vanished when, upon coming to Lake Pontchartrain, they were met by a cool and invigorating breeze.

"Ah-h-h!" exclaimed the transformed skipper, turning about and sniffing like an old war-horse at the smell of gunpowder, "there 's salt in that!"

Zach looked up inquiringly.

"That 's the sea, Bub, — the sea; don't ye smell it? We hain't had a breath like that this many a day!"

"The sea!" repeated Zach, gazing stupidly at the lake before him.

"Yes, yonder," interposed Mr. Falconer, pointing, as he spoke, in the opposite direction, to a broad, blue expanse which bounded the southern horizon. "The

skipper is right; it is the sea, — or rather the Gulf of Mexico, all the same thing.”

Mr. Falconer, as it proved, lived on the straggling isthmus which separates lakes Pontchartrain and Borgne, the latter being in effect an inlet of the Gulf, where he owned a fine sugar plantation.

Here was a new phase of life for Zach, and matter for wonder on every hand: the broad fields waving with unfamiliar crops; the negroes busily at work among the growing canes with their clumsy hoes; the slave-quarters, a double row of little cabins which they drove past on the way from the boat; and chief of all, bounding their vision to the north, the wide-spreading Pontchartrain.

After a short drive they approached the house. It stood upon rising ground, with a fine greensward sweeping away to the lake. On the right it was flanked by a thick growth of oranges, lemons, and oleanders; and on the left by a large two-story square dove-cot, the universal appendage of a sugar-planter's house.

The house itself greatly stirred Zach's curiosity. It was an old Creole structure, which its present owner had enlarged without materially changing. A hodge-podge architecturally, it was perhaps on that account all the more picturesque. Low and rambling, with its lower story of brick and the upper of wood, it was furnished on three sides with a broad gallery overhung by the extended roof, which gave it a commodious and hospitable air. The gallery was supported by round brick columns, whose bareness was relieved by trellises over which clambered

the Cherokee-rose, now white with blossoms. The second story alone was occupied by the family, the ground floor being given up to the slaves.

Meantime the carriage, winding up the avenue, stopped at last before the hall door, where the steps and the whole lower gallery were crowded with negroes of all ages, gathered to welcome their master and young mistress.

"Let me down, — do let me down, quick, papa!" cried the latter, springing from her father's arms into the very midst of the expectant throng.

"Children, oh, children," she went on, including in the term hearers of all ages, "I've got such beautiful things for you. Ribbons for you, Fifine, nice red ones; some yellow ones for you, Zenobie, to wear with your new yellow frock; a turban for you, mammy; a silver thimble for you, Lisette; some beads for you, Sappho; and candy for the pickaninies. Wait till they bring my box, — there it is! there it is now, and that is the new boy helping to carry it. That is Zach; he found me when Mimi lost me. It was very bad of Mimi, but she cried and said she did n't mean to, and so papa did n't sell her. That big tall man over there is Sandy, he is Zach's friend; they are sailors, and they are going to sail papa's new boat."

While Sylvia was thus flying about among the women, chattering like a magpie, her father, after returning the greetings of his servants, talked apart with a middle-aged mulatto whom he presently introduced to Zach and Sandy.

"This, boys, is my steward Gabriel; he will look

out for you, and by and by, when I get time, I will take you down and show you the boat."

Zach was relieved to find that Mr. Falconer's house-servants, although they had French names, for the most part talked English, having been brought from Nassau, where their master had other large plantations.

When the dinner-hour arrived, the new recruits were ushered into a room on the ground floor, where seats had been assigned them at the servants' table. Glancing at the two long rows of dusky faces gathered at the board, Zach flushed violently, and marched out of the house.

Sandy, thinking only of satisfying his hunger, sat quietly down, well aware of the fact that he had often met with worse fare and rougher company. Not unnaturally a little merriment, half stifled in the sleeves of the younger fry over Zach's exit, broke forth into a loud titter on Sandy's calling out, —

"Oh, come back, Bub! Come along an' git yer grub! They won't bite ye!"

Giving no heed to the admonition, Zach went and sulked in the gallery. Here, as it chanced, Gabriel came upon him, and inquired what was the matter.

"I ain't goin' to eat in there with *them*," said Zach, pouting.

"Whar, den, d' ye spec fer to eat, honey?" asked Gabriel, not without a touch of satire.

"Don' know, 'n' don't care," muttered Zach.

"Mebbe yo' spec ter eat upstars wid de gran-dees."

"None o' *your* business what I expect," fired up Zach, walking off upon the lawn.

"Look a-yer, now, honey, lemme give yo' a word o' wisdom! Ef yo' want suffin' ter eat, yo' 'll eat it, whar 't is, 'n' ef yo' lef it, yo' 's gwine ter go hungry; mind dat now, honey!"

"I 'll starve to death 'fore I 'll eat with niggers," flared up Zach, whirling around defiantly upon Gabriel.

"All right, honey; jes sot right ter work! Nobody ain't gwine for ter hinder."

With these words the major-domo went his way, leaving Zach to his own devices. Throwing himself on the grass at the foot of a tree, the pouting youngster raised his eyes and received a shock. There, just above him in the gallery, smoking his after-dinner cigar, sat Falconer, within easy earshot of the late conversation.

Zach dropped his head in dismay, and waited for the expected storm of disapproval to manifest itself. After a long interval he again stole a glance upward. Falconer had disappeared. Feeling sure that measures were being taken for his punishment, Zach started up as if with an impulse to escape, but restrained by a feeling of pride, he lay down again, and nerved himself to meet the consequences.

They were not long in developing. An old negro in a yellow turban presently approached from the direction of the kitchen, bearing a heaped-up plate of dinner, which she coaxingly beguiled him to eat.

Other results of Zach's rebellion followed, equally

agreeable and equally puzzling to him. Next day Gabriel, evidently under orders which he executed with no very good grace, quartered the new crew in the loft over the boat-house, which he hastily fitted up for their reception with a couple of pallet beds, a table, and some stools. Their meals, he informed them a little sulkily, were to be brought down to them from the house.

Zach was scarcely more delighted at the change than Sandy. The loft was big and empty, and, although it had no window, opened at the gable-end with a wide door upon the lake, which gave them not only plenty of air, but an unobstructed view of the water.

They had scarcely got settled in their new quarters when Sylvia made her appearance. She showed no disposition to neglect her new friends. Every day, after lessons, she came with Mimi to the boat-house. She brought thither her dolls and all the paraphernalia of doll-dom. Indeed, as presently appeared, she took a far greater delight in playing on the cramped little gallery crowded with boating gear, than on the spacious corridors at home. Sandy at first grumbled a good deal at having the place littered with "women's fixin's," but the busy little lady soon silenced the growler by taking him into her confidence and appealing to him, when Zach gave stupid advice as to the health or management of her numerous family.

Zach, as it proved, often gave stupid advice, and Sylvia had frequent occasion to lecture him.

His docility under this discipline, and his general

submission to the whims of his fair little tyrant, were matters of much wonder to the skipper, mindful of his own experience of certain stubborn traits in the character of his comrade.

But as he presently discovered, the leopard had not so quickly changed his spots.

The children were seated one day on the boat-house gallery; Sylvia looking on while Zach made a gun-tree dugout.

"Would you be afraid if a great big whale should come right out of the lake to eat you up?"

"No."

"Did you ever see a whale?"

"No."

"How do you know you wouldn't be afraid, then?"

"'Cos I would n't."

"Are you afraid of anything?"

"I guess not."

"Not of the dark?"

"Ho, no!" contemptuously.

"*I* am, and I'm afraid of whales, too. Mimi says there are great big ones in the lake with mouths as big, — as big as that!" measuring with her hands, "and that they will jump out of the water and eat me right up, if I come down here alone!"

"Mimi is a liar!"

"Oh, you naughty boy! That's a bad, wicked word!"

"What is?"

"What you said."

Zach made no defense of his language, but took

refuge from further criticism in silence. His companion, however, did not leave him long at rest.

"Is that for me?"

"What?"

"That boat you 're making."

"'T ain't for anybody."

"Why not?"

"'Cos it won't be good for anythin'."

"It 'll be good enough for me, an' I want it."

"Well, you can have it, then."

"Here comes Mimi! She's comin' to take me home. You can come, too, and eat dinner with us."

"I don't want to."

"Papa won't care."

The boat-maker shook his head.

"But you 'll have to come when it is my birthday."

There was another and emphatic shake of the head.

"You must!"

"No."

"I shall be very, very angry, then."

There was no answer.

"Why won't you come?"

"'Cos I don't want to."

"That is n't a reason."

The whittler made no comment.

"That is n't a good reason. Do you hear? Why don't you speak? Papa says I may have a party on my birthday, so you *must* come. Stop shaking your head, naughty Zach! Now, hark! I am going to

ask you very nicely, the way I ask papa for things:—Please, Zach, will you come to my party?"

"No."

These stubborn moods were all the more puzzling to Sylvia, for being in such marked contrast to her companion's every-day humor. His indulgence for her caprices was indeed well-nigh boundless, and his resources not a few. He personated at command all the beasts of the field and the fowls of the air, now flapping his wings and crowing like a cock, now fetching and carrying sticks like a dog and barking at Mimi, now suffering himself to be harnessed for a horse and dragging his delighted playmate about with such speed and vigor that her donkey was well-nigh superseded.

In their comings and goings it chanced that they occasionally encountered Falconer, who took no other note of them than to bestow an absent-minded smile upon his daughter.

Meanwhile the constant mention of Zach's name in the schoolroom at last aroused Mrs. Mason, the fat English governess, to the fact that this new playmate was becoming a very important personage in the life of her young charge. Wherefore, like a prudent woman, she thought it well to visit the boat-house, and see for herself whether he was an eligible companion.

It chanced that on the afternoon of Mrs. Mason's visit Zach was lying on the grass outside the boat-house, smoking his pipe. As he did not get up and bow at her approach, nor take off his hat, nor remove his pipe, it was evident that he was shockingly

ill-bred. Mrs. Mason looked about, hesitated, and at last, in much doubt, asked, —

“Can it be — er — are you the new boy?”

“Yeah, I guess I be.”

“Is your name Zach?”

“Yes, marm,” said the smoker, first calmly spitting out a mouthful of tobacco-juice to give play to his vocal organs.

“Oh! — er — ah, indeed!” commented the horror-stricken governess, turning away.

“D’ you want anythin’?”

“Nothing at all,” was the decided answer.

Thereupon returning with precipitancy to the house, Mrs. Mason forbade the dismayed Sylvia “ever to go again to the boat-house, or play any more with that dreadful, low, vulgar little boy!”

Being busied next day helping Sandy stretch the new sails on the yacht, Zach had no leisure to remark Sylvia’s absence. But when another day passed, and still another, and she did not come, he plainly began to grow uneasy. This feeling was confirmed by a remark carelessly let fall by Sandy on coming upon a forgotten doll on the window-ledge.

“I say, Bub,” said the skipper, tenderly taking the puppet in his rough hand, “I guess the little gal must be sick.”

Zach looked startled. He did not answer, but went out and sat on the landing and brooded over the matter. At last, seized by a sudden impulse, he hurried away on the pretext of getting some oil for the lantern.

Approaching the house, he was conscious of sev-

eral persons in the upper gallery. Keeping his eyes fixed upon the ground, he hurried along to the kitchen door. As he returned across the lawn, he was discovered and hailed from the gallery. It was Sylvia's voice that called.

He stopped and looked up. There was a commotion on the gallery. A family discussion was going on, of which Zach guessed himself to be the subject. Mrs. Mason's deep contralto was heard in shocked tones of expostulation. With this alternated Falconer's resonant baritone in a long duet.

Meanwhile Sylvia, in contempt of all objection, rushed down the stairs and went bounding to her friend, who awaited her coming with an expression oddly compounded of pride and delight. He surrendered to the impulsive grasp of the little maid, who coaxed him to stay and play with her. He cast a deprecating look at the gallery. Matters there had reached a crisis: Mrs. Mason, in consequence of some remark of the planter, was in the act of retiring in high dudgeon.

Shrewdly interpreting this little scene, Sylvia seized Zach's arm, and despite his reluctance drew him to a seat on the lower gallery. Falconer noted the movement without comment. In the stillness of the summer afternoon, the voices of the children could be easily heard where he sat. At another time their words might have passed unheeded, but now, with the strictures of the governess still sounding in his ears, he purposely dropped his book and listened.

"You are not a low, vulgar boy, are you, Zach?"

asked Sylvia. Although the listener could not see the hot blood surge over Zach's face, and the big drops of sweat stand out on his forehead, the fact that the question went unanswered was significant.

"Are you?" persisted the ingenuous little questioner, busily plaiting some strands of long grass as she talked.

"I don't know," answered Zach, huskily.

"What makes you smoke a pipe, and spit on the ground, and keep on your hat when ladies speak to you?"

Again there was a silence.

"P'raps your mother never told you not to."

"I hain't got any mother."

"So I haven't got any mother, too; but I did have one, only I never saw her. Please go and pick me some more grass to braid!"

Zach went mechanically and did as he was bid. Meantime his companion's thoughts had taken a turn.

"What are you going to be, Zach, when you grow up?"

The boy sat sorting the blades of grass with a look of profound preoccupation, and did not answer.

"You going to be a sailor?"

He nodded absently.

"On a big, big ship?"

He nodded again.

"I should n't like to be a sailor;" the prattler paused to adjust a refractory strand; "a sailor wears such bad clothes, and has such dirty hands."

Casting a downward glance upon his coarse boots

and trousers, Zach thrust his begrimed hands into his pockets.

"I should like to be a man like papa, and have nice white hands and wear clean clothes and live in a big house and have lots of people to work, wouldn't you?"

"No!" was the fierce answer. "I'd rather be just what I am, an' nothin' else."

With these words he sprang from the bench where he had been sitting, and hurried off in the direction of the boat-house.

An amused look shone in Falconer's eyes as he gazed after the indignant boy, and, yielding to a passing impulse, he peeped over the railing at his daughter below. She sat with the half-finished braid in her hand, gazing after her companion with a look of profound astonishment.

After a few minutes' reflection, she came upstairs and, leaning over her father's shoulder, asked, —

"Papa, would you rather be a sailor than to be you?"

"No, my pet."

"And I wouldn't rather be Mimi than to be me. I guess everybody would rather be himself than somebody else."

CHAPTER IX.

HAVING finished the equipment of the yacht to his mind, and thoroughly tested her sailing qualities, Sandy sent word to his employer that she was ready for service. The planter promptly appeared for a trial trip. The wind was fluky, and the conditions for speed were not at the best, but on the whole the boat behaved well, and the skipper showed an easy mastery over her which did not escape the eye of the owner. He looked pleased, or, to speak more correctly, he did not look displeased, a distinction of value to those with whom his moods were important.

Thenceforth Sandy found his place no sinecure. The yacht was called into requisition whenever the weather permitted, and like a new toy proved a valuable resource to the owner and his guests against the tedium of plantation life. Sylvia, who was usually of the party, soon found herself very much at home on the deck of her namesake.

By such constant exercise, Zach made rapid strides in seamanship. Although conservative in his praises, Sandy let fall a dry word now and then which showed no little pride in his pupil's advancement.

It turned out, however, that besides zeal for Zach's advancement, there was another and deeper purpose underlying the skipper's action,— a purpose

which Zach found not a little discomposing when his companion unguardedly let it out.

It was one evening, as they sat on the landing puffing their pipes and watching the swaying masts of the yacht, as she lay athwart the long white track of the moonlight.

"Bub," began Sandy, knocking out his ashes preparatory to a fresh charge, "ye 're gittin' most growed up, ain't ye?"

"I ain't more 'n half way up to your shoulder, yet."

"Oh, wall, ye don't want to pattern after no such run-to-seed pigweed as I be. I 'm overgrowed; I war n't looked after when I was a youngster, an' I kep' on a-growin' 'cos I didn't know enough to stop. No, ye 're wall enough off for size. Then agin ye 're beginnin' to hev some sense, an' are gettin' more handy 'bout the boat."

Zach looked inquiringly at the speaker, but could not make his face out in the darkness.

"No," pursued Sandy, "th' ain't nothin' lackin' to ye now 'cept time."

The listener coughed deprecatingly, but could think of nothing to say to such an unexpected tribute.

"Ye can handle that little critter," waving his pipe towards the yacht, "as good as I can, any day in the week."

"Ho!" ejaculated Zach, forced into a protest by such extravagance.

"I know wot I 'm talkin' 'bout. I kep an eye on ye to-day, an' I say I can't larn ye no more 'bout

this kind o' navigation. Ye'll hev to git the rest for yerself, jes' by hard knocks. That 's the way a man gits the best o' wot he knows. Nobody ever larns anythin' from anybody else's hard knocks. He don't feel 'em, an' he don't b'lieve in 'em till he gits knocked himself. Yes, Bub, ye 've got to hev yer own scars to swear by, an' ye'll git 'em fast enough, never fear. Thet 's wot we was all made for, I reckon: jes' to see how much knockin' down we could stan' up under. Wall, now, that bein' the case, I mought as well cast off one time as another."

"What d' you mean by cast off?"

"Wall, it 's jest here, Bub: this critter 's like a little sandpeep, it 's kind o' child's business handlin' of her. It 's all right for you, but th' ain't no kind o' need o' me here."

"What, you ain't goin' away, be yer?"

"I dunno 's I be, 'n' I dunno 's I ain't. I ben a thinkin', that 's all."

"Where be you goin' to?"

"When it comes to that, young un, I can't go now'eres till I start, an' I ain't started yit."

Zach was silent for several minutes. Meantime, the fact that his pipe went out showed the effect upon him of the skipper's disturbing words. With an affectation of calmness worthy of an adult, he presently asked, —

"What makes you want to go away?"

"Wall, Bub, fust an' foremost, I like my water salt. I ben used to it, 'n' I git tired o' this puddle business. Then agin — but, ez I said afore, I ain't *sayin'* anythin', I 'm jest a-thinkin'. We 're all on

us thinkin', 'n' a precious good deal on it never comes to nothin'."

"Where d' ye want to go to?" pursued Zach, too much stirred up to drop the matter.

"I ain't picked out no spot, fact is, I don't care much; but I tell ye 't would n't do for anybody to offer me a two-year cruise 'n' expect I should be bashful 'bout clinchin' the bargain."

"When d' yer expect to go?" persisted Zach.

"Look a-here, Bub! what 's the matter with ye? Expect! I don't *expect* anythin', any time, anywhar; I 'm thinkin', I tell ye, 'n' th' ain't nothin' more to be said 'bout it, one way or t' other."

Zach asked no more questions, but it was clear enough from his manner that he thought Sandy had said too much or not enough.

The next week Falconer had a visitor, whom Zach remarked at first only as a small, sallow man with a French accent. He was destined, however, to see much of the new-comer, for, on his account, as it appeared, Falconer suddenly renewed his waning interest in yachting, and the two went sailing nearly every day. Seeing them together thus constantly, it presently began to dawn upon Zach that the planter treated his guest with much consideration, and that the stranger himself had an air of intelligence out of all proportion to his insignificant personal appearance.

Falconer invariably called his guest, "Monsieur," a name which Zach soon discovered was used rather as a term of endearment than respect. For the

rest, it soon transpired in the conversation that the stranger was a noted lawyer from New Orleans, and at once the business adviser and the intimate friend of his host. In the talk between the two, which was at first mainly upon business, Zach's attention was aroused by the frequent mention of Nassau and of Falconer's estates upon the island of New Providence. And in this connection, Zach overheard a little scrap of their conversation which he had grievous occasion long afterwards to recall. Falconer was talking with some enthusiasm about his agent in Nassau, when Monsieur casually asked his name.

"Woodbine," said the planter.

Monsieur replied by a low, long whistle.

"Eh! What now?"

"How long have you employed him?"

"About three months."

"Did you ever happen to hear his nickname?"

"How should I?"

"He is universally known by the sobriquet of 'Notorious Woodbine.'"

The two men exchanged looks. Falconer's face darkened, and the subject was dropped.

Meanwhile Zach himself was destined to become better acquainted with the restless little lawyer, for one day, during the absence of Falconer and Sandy on an expedition to Lake Borgne, he came down to the landing and requested to be taken out. Zach got under way and took him for a run up the lake. Lacking older company, Monsieur talked to Zach. It seemed necessary to his comfort that he should talk to somebody, and Zach was far enough from

taking exception. At first, busied with his duty as skipper, he did not give scrupulous heed to what was said. Gradually, however, he was drawn on to listen, and ended by being absorbed and well-nigh spellbound by the stranger's eloquence. Save only the unapproachable Burr, Zach had never heard anything like him. His head seemed packed so full of knowledge that everything which fell from his lips had point and value.

Beginning with the yacht, Monsieur passed naturally to the Mississippi, and waxed eloquent, describing to his open-mouthed auditor the manner of its discovery, and the famous men, De Soto, Hennepin, Marquette, Joliet, and La Salle, who were concerned in it. He dwelt upon their zeal, their devotion, the incredible hardships they endured, their hairbreadth escapes, their thrilling adventures, until Zach's eyes kindled, his blood quickened, and his breath came quick and short.

This was not stuff to pass into one ear and out the other. It gained lodgment in heart and brain. It rekindled certain old inflammable material which had lain smouldering since the memorable days of the expedition. The result was a natural longing for the stranger to reappear. Happily for Zach, chance brought about what he so much wished. Falconer was housed several days by a slight illness. Thrown upon his own resources, Monsieur spent much of his time upon the water.

With Sandy to manage the boat, Zach had more leisure to listen. Monsieur did not fail to talk, and it was always of something new: stories of the Indian

wars, stories of famous hunters and their exploits, stories of Captain Kidd and the bold buccaneers of the Spanish main.

Upon the listener the effect of this talk was that of being suddenly lifted to a mountain's peak; it resulted in an inspiring enlargement of vision, in an opening up of boundless race-courses for the imagination. An unsuspected past unfolded in vast perspective behind, a future teeming with untold possibilities loomed mistily before.

Naturally, Monsieur could not be blind to the effect his talk produced. Flattered by such breathless attention, he in turn was led to take more than a passing interest in his listener. He questioned Zach about himself, rather perfunctorily it is true, but with the result that he voluntarily promised, upon his next visit, to bring to his young friend books in which he might read these and other marvels for himself.

Meantime, something happened which caused a great sensation at Basswood, and drove Monsieur and his bewitching stories out of mind. Sylvia came skipping down to the boat-house one day, her eyes big with excitement, carrying her largest and finest doll, which she solemnly placed in Zach's arms with the startling admonition, —

"There, take her! and if I never, never come back, you must be her mother!"

Zach, holding in a gingerly way the finely-clad Parisian puppet, looked dumfounded.

"We're going away, — papa and I, and Mrs. Mason and Mimi, — away off to Nassau, and papa

says I must not take Elaine because she would be seasick, and so — so you must take care of her.”

Between surprise at the news and consternation at the grave responsibility thus suddenly thrust upon him, Zach could not bring forth a word.

“You must be very careful about her food, and take her out riding every day, and rock her to sleep nights; and when she is naughty you must put her in the corner, only,” went on the excited child, with a warning forefinger, “you mustn’t leave her there, on account of spiders; and — and you must keep her clothes nice, and you must be good to her, and take her up when she cries, and give her nice things to play with.”

Bewildered with these profuse instructions, the unhappy Zach stood helplessly dandling the doll in his arms and looking about for a place in which to bestow it, while the busy prattler, all unconscious of his distress, continued: —

“Mimi is bringing down her bed, an’ you can put it next to yours, so you can hear her when she cries. See, there she comes! Mimi! Mimi! Now, if you are tired, I will take her. Come to me, Elaine! See, you must hold her up to you, so; not way off like that.”

Relieved of his embarrassing charge, Zach began to ponder the news, and asked huskily, —

“Where is Nassau?”

“Why, it is our other home, don’t you know? and papa has another house there, and lots of people, and there are beautiful flowers; but it will not be so good as Basswood, for we shall not have you and Sandy and The Sylvia.”

A call from Falconer broke up the conversation, and the ecstatic child went hopping and skipping away, leaving Zach in a turmoil of emotions.

Henceforth all was bustle up at the mansion, and the stir of preparation was felt in a greater or less degree all over the plantation.

Although, as Zach heard from the slaves, the planter's visits to Nassau were periodical, and usually limited to a few weeks, he made his arrangements as carefully as for a long absence. An experienced superintendent was left in charge of the plantation, Gabriel had control of the house and offices, while all was to be under the general supervision of Monsieur, for whom rooms were provided at the mansion whenever it pleased him to spend a few days at the plantation.

Hearing nothing from the planter, the crew imagined themselves forgotten, but on the morning of his departure Falconer came down to the landing for a final word.

"Good-by, boys," he said; "look out for the boat, and keep things shipshape! Monsieur may want a sail when he comes down. Call on the superintendent for anything you need. Good-by; perhaps my next visit to Nassau may be made in *The Sylvia*."

An hour later a message came to Zach from his little playmate that he was to accompany them to the vessel to see them off. Once on board ship, that agitated little person flew about between her father, Mrs. Mason, and Mimi, with questions, warnings, and injunctions to take care of her bird, her dog, and her traveling doll,—the smallest of her family,

which, with much reluctance, Falconer had been obliged to admit of the party.

When the last moment came, and Zach was ordered ashore, Sylvia, who in her excitement had not realized that they must part, broke forth in tragic tone,—

“Papa, papa! make Zach come, too! Oh, papa, cannot Zach go with us?”

Falconer, busy with some last hurried directions to Monsieur, answered impatiently, —

“No, no, darling! Go away! Do not tease papa now!”

The little lip trembled, the small bosom heaved, and a flood of tears rolled down her cheeks as she watched Zach reluctantly pass over the gang-plank. Then, as he turned to take a last look, a little tear-choked voice called out, —

“Don’t cry, Zach! I’m coming back soon. Take care of Elaine, an-an-and give her a ki-ki-kiss for me!”

That evening, when Sandy went stumbling up to bed, he found his companion sitting at the open door of the loft holding something in his arms.

“Hullo, Bub, wot ye got there?”

Receiving no answer, the skipper approached and recognized the waxen features and rigid figure of Elaine.

“Wall, I ’m” —

Finishing his exclamation with a soft whistle, the astonished skipper forgot his purpose of turning in, and went down to have another pipe on the gallery.

CHAPTER X.

WHAT with the house shut up, the family gone, and Zach in the dumps, Sandy began to find time hang heavy on his hands. He lounged about the landing, stretched his long legs in the gallery, smoked innumerable pipes, yawning between whiles, until he well-nigh unhinged his huge under jaw, and saved himself from utter mental collapse by venting cynicisms upon an unheeding world.

As time wore on, the tedium grew more paralyzing. Day after day passed, unmarked by an event, and night brought relief only because it brought oblivion. Finding things at home so irksome, as a natural result the skipper posted off to town for distraction. In his preoccupation Zach took little heed of his companion's movements, and was therefore all the more surprised when, one day, Sandy came home with an air which, for him, might be called bustling, and began to pack up his traps.

"What you doin'?"

"Histin' anchor, Bub."

"Goin' away?"

"I reckon."

"On a cruise?"

"A reg'lar old-timer."

"When? — where?" asked the bewildered Zach.

"Wall, Bub, for *when* ye may say instanter, soon

as we git the cargo stowed; for *where*, that 's a horse of another color, — from this to St. Kitts, an' from there to the Lord knows where."

There was, then, no doubt; Sandy was really going. Straightway every other subject for fancy or reflection was lost sight of in the overwhelming thought. Recovering presently from his first dismay, Zach feebly clutched at a straw of compromise: he too would go.

"'T ain't no use, Bub; I thought of it, but 't ain't no kind o' use; they would n't look at ye. This is no foolin' business, it 's hard service afore the mast, 'n' the captain 's a tough un, by all accounts. No, Bub, your nest here is all feathered, 'n' ye jest better stick to it. I shall turn up agin one o' these days, ef I don't go to the bottom, 'n' ef I do, 't won't be no great loss. Mebbe ye 'll be big enough to go next time, but fer now ye 'd jest better hold hard to yer anchorage."

Zach said no more, but silently lent a hand, and next morning, before light, set off with Sandy to the city, and duly saw him aboard the Josephine, a three-master bound for the Antilles with a cargo of lumber.

Their leave-taking was cut short by the captain, who, coming by chance upon his new recruit loitering on the dock, roughly ordered him aboard; so at the last it was a hurried grip of the hand, and a "Bear up, hearty!" and all was over.

Although Sandy was too busy to take further heed of him, Zach lingered aimlessly on the dock until the vessel weighed anchor and sailed slowly away towards the blue waters of the Gulf.

Going back was like a return to a wilderness. Every human being in whom he had any interest was gone. Instead of making good their loss, he sought, as it seemed, a solitude more absolute by fleeing from all possible contact with his kind. Every morning, fair or foul, he spread wide the sails of his boat, and flew out over the lake on as wild-winged and aimless a flight as that of the sea-birds which, floating over from the Gulf, circled and hovered above him in his course.

There, at the centre of his little sea, he floated secure from interruption, and gave way to his musings.

Doubtless, — so speedily does the egoist develop from the recluse, — these were not without bitterness. To sweeten his cup of home-made gall there haply came remembrances of that tear-choked voice calling good-by to him from the Nassau packet, and of Sandy's stanch and cheery farewell.

To these forebodings upon his own situation and its outcome succeeded presently thoughts better worth while, — thoughts upon a familiar old topic loosely called life. Not altogether profitless speculation, for in his intellectual flounderings the poor boy caught some glimmering side-lights on divers wholesome truths never before dreamt of in his philosophy. There are, moreover, good reasons, not here to be set forth, for believing that during these solitary days he underwent, for the second time in his short life, a spiritual, or more properly a mental, awakening consequent upon the new and vigorous impulse which had been given to his specu-

lations by the talk of Monsieur. Day by day the lonely little sailor pondered these stirring tales, with a quickened movement of the blood and a curious creeping of the flesh which he could by no means account for. Who were they, then, these old pioneers and heroes? Were they of a different race and kind from the men he had known? Had any of them, perchance, come from humble folk and sordid surroundings? What, moreover, had they left to do in the world? Had they not achieved all the noble things? Had not indeed the grand and heroic element departed from life? What sign of it could be found in yonder dirty, busy, chattering, chaffering little town, with its hodge-podge of races, religions, and aims?

These recluse habits and solitary communings served but to make wider the gulf between Zach and the household. The slaves found the young skipper distant and moody, and after Sandy went away, they avoided the boat-house and landing; the superintendent and Gabriel were too busy to think of him, and thus Zach was left to his own devices. As for Monsieur, save for one or two flying trips upon business, it was many months before he found leisure to make a regular visit at Basswood.

In all this time Zach had heard no news of the travelers. From the talk among the slaves, whenever he went to the house, he gathered that the family had already long outstayed the limit originally fixed for their visit. Still other weeks and months flew by, and no preparations were made for their reception. Windows and blinds remained shut, the

vines ran riot over the trellises, dust collected in the long galleries, and spiders held high carnival in the countless "coignes of vantage" afforded by the capitals of the brick pillars.

These busy usurpers were destined, as it seemed, to acquire prescriptive rights, for one morning came Monsieur on his long-deferred visit, bringing news that Falconer and Sylvia had gone from Nassau to England for a stay of indefinite duration.

This dismaying report made Zach feel like an outcast. Henceforth, with regard to the world and his own kind, he felt himself unattached and alien. There seemed no longer anything in common between him and the rest of the universe, save that physical bond of gravitation which he had heard Monsieur describe. One by one all the moral ties, the ties of service, obligation, and fellowship, had dissolved, and left him feeling almost giddy in his isolation. The future, too, which yesterday seemed so possible, so sharply defined, had in a trice become a remote and befogged uncertainty. He realized now that the long-deferred day of homecoming had in his mind been unconsciously invested with the value of an epoch.

Notwithstanding his former liking for Monsieur, this visit of the restless attorney proved an embarrassment to the little hermit. During his months of solitude he had so warped away from his own kind that his manners had become constrained, and his very voice grown rusty from disuse. Moreover, Monsieur was not one to be put off with half-attention. He was the same alert, exacting little man

as before. He demanded of the young skipper nimble service, constant companionship, and watchful attendance.

Although the visitor avowed that he had come to Basswood for rest, he seemed resolved to defeat this purpose by a tireless activity. Especially his tongue knew no moment of repose. Zach often wondered whether, when alone, he talked to himself. The irksomeness of the intrusion once over, however, when, as it were, Zach had been shaken back into a normal state of fraternity, he began as before to take an interest in his companion's talk, and having once yielded to the spell, it carried him swiftly on to his former unbounded admiration.

Remembering his old promise, Monsieur one day appeared at the landing with a volume of Plutarch's Lives. Here was a beginning of new things. Returned from the sail and seated in the doorway of the boat-house, with Elaine propped up against the wall at his side, his inseparable pipe in his lips, Zach spent the long afternoon over the enchanting book. He talked of it next day with Monsieur. He stared in astonishment when told that they were not made-up stories, those marvelous tales, but sober facts, — for whatever Monsieur's real opinion with regard to them, he solemnly assured Zach of their high, venerable, and awful authority.

Hungrily the bewitched reader demanded the other volumes, and eagerly read them over and over again; and when the light failed and he could read no more, as he sat alone in the gallery of the little boat-house, where the stars looked down upon him

like human eyes, where the mists, floating up from the bosom of the lake, took on the semblance of stately and heroic forms, where the sougling of the wind among the overhanging trees, and the cry of the bittern in the distant swamps, all helped to fill the night with mystery and loneliness, then all he had read came back to him, then his kindled fancy peopled the vast and silent wastes about him with illustrious shapes. He scoured, with mighty hosts, the Syrian plains; he ploughed, with conquering triremes, the *Ægean* wave; he thundered philippics to applauding senates, and reënacted all the stirring and glorious scenes of the Plutarchian world.

Amazed at the zest of this newly-awakened intellect, Monsieur took a natural pleasure in ministering to it. He brought forth book after book from the stores of Falconer's library, which proved to be well stocked with the heterogeneous old-time material which our grandfathers, God help them! battered upon. For there was not only Rollins, Chapman's Homer, Dryden's Virgil, and the Adventures of Telemachus, but Addison, Pope, Swift, Bunyan, and Defoe. Of all these, remembering the commander's advice, Zach applied himself chiefly to those which presumably dealt with facts.

The watchful attorney, fearing lest indiscriminate credulity should become a fixed mental habit with his pupil, presently interfered. He flung cold water, he vented some wholesome jeers, he flouted the demigods of antiquity, he belittled their doughty doings.

Zach reddened and bit his lip, but presently, firing

up, made a stout defense of his worthies, lamenting that their strain had died out of a degenerate world, along with the breed of saints and martyrs.

Monsieur laughed aloud. "Pooh, boy! We have as many now as ever. More, indeed; they swarm, that brood. They're a troublesome lot, too, these heroes of yours; why, yonder Yankees up North, who within my remembrance drove Johnny Bull snarling and skulking back to his island, they were heroes of a sort. Nearer at hand in point of time, there was our clever little schemer, Aaron Burr."

"The commander, you mean?"

"I mean the traitor, — he who would have been a hero, — one of the good old-fashioned sort, too, — if he had succeeded."

Whether dumfounded at the thought that he himself had been associated with a real hero, or restrained by an impulse of caution, Zach made no comment.

"Then," continued Monsieur, "to come down to the very present moment, there is Buonaparte."

"What has he done?" demanded Zach. The astonished attorney stared at such ignorance.

"Done? What Alexander and Cæsar failed to do, — conquered the world. A different world from theirs, *mon Dieu!* Not a world that fights with sticks and stones, and the like, but a world united, disciplined, brought up amid the fumes of gunpowder. Ay, ay, he outstrips them all; 'tis only the long-ago makes those others seem so mighty, see you?"

"And is he living now?"

"That he is, and the greatest villain that draws breath," answered Monsieur calmly.

"What does he do so bad?"

"He dyes the rivers with blood, and manures all Europe with the corpses of its best men. He robs, burns, pillages, and assassinates."

"Why does he do this?" demanded Zach innocently.

"For a noble object." Monsieur laughed and shrugged his shoulders. "To glut his vanity, to bring all the world to bow down before him, the great little pigmy."

"But," was the wondering comment, "he is a Frenchman, and you are a Frenchman, and" —

"No, no; neither the one nor the other. I was born — what matters where? and he, — he is a vile little Corsican."

"How did he begin to do all this?" asked Zach, after some minutes' silence.

"'Begin'? At the beginning. He made up his mind when a babe what he wanted in life, and then marched straight to it, knocking everybody out of his path."

"But what was the first thing?" persisted the absorbed listener.

"A simple thing enough: to conquer the world, mind you, one first becomes a soldier. 'T was what the little Corsican yonder did. He wasted no time on other matters, he thought of nothing else, he cared for nothing else, and so, see you? in time he arrived."

Conscious in part of the interest he had awakened

in his youthful listener, and noting the wistful look in the boy's eyes at parting, the attorney carelessly let fall a suggestion that he would on a pinch give him a helping hand in his studies.

If Monsieur made this offer perfunctorily as a farewell compliment, he must have been taken aback by the eagerness with which it was accepted, and the enthusiasm with which the recipient availed himself of the offered privilege. Thereafter, twice a week, storm or shine, Zach turned up at the lawyer's little brick domicile in town, and with such an intent, hungry look that Monsieur had a disagreeable impression of a vampire come to fasten upon him. It was more than the good man had bargained for, and there is not a doubt that he was at first greatly bored. Indeed, it is to be feared that he tried by long and severe lessons to discourage this invasion of his leisure. In vain; this shock-headed boat-boy, with his extraordinary zest, quailed not before any task. Monsieur rubbed his glasses. Was this a genius he had lighted upon? The little lawyer was too acute to be long deceived, but he discovered presently, to his astonishment, how far concentration and steadiness of purpose avail to rival the achievements of the rarest intelligence.

Not satisfied with his regular studies, Zach was a cormorant of books. Monsieur quickly settled that problem by turning him loose in the library at Basswood. Finding all efforts vain to guide him, he ended by bidding him browse at will. From the first his bent was most marked, and his range singularly contracted, — history, politics, and govern-

ment, and the tale was told. He delighted in the thrust and parry and the stilted courtesy of diplomatic correspondence, in the intrigues and manœuvres of statecraft; and Monsieur unwittingly opened a whole treasure-house by the accidental discussion of a question of international law. Here was a new pasture, belonging to his own domain. Monsieur thought to terrify him by bringing forth dusty, ponderous volumes of the classic writers, but he thereby only added fuel to the flames, for his indefatigable pupil never rested until he had brought his Latin to the point where he could read Grotius, Vattel, and the other old pundits, in the original.

All this, be it said, was the work of several years, — of busy, quick-flying, fruitful years. It is noteworthy that this constant and continued intellectual training effected little or no change in his speech and bearing. His grammar was as uncertain and his manners were as unformed as when he arrived at Basswood.

Naturally, while thus absorbed, his regrets for the old life became less poignant. As a proof, however, that he was not unfaithful to its memories, it having one day occurred to him that the two years assigned by Sandy as the duration of his cruise had long since expired, he flung down his books and rushed out of doors, staring like one just awaked from sleep.

Thereupon, thinking of the matter, he became greatly troubled; he neglected his studies, and spent his time haunting the wharves, watching incoming vessels, and making incessant inquiries of the sailors.

Thus busied, he was one day making his way along the crowded dock where a New York packet was getting ready to sail, when he heard near at hand a voice which made his heart leap and sent the blood coursing through his veins.

Turning, he saw near by a family group, of which the central figure, a remarkable-looking woman, was speaking. Instantly he recognized her, and restrained an impulse to rush forward. It was Mrs. Blennerhassett.

After helping her husband pick out their luggage from the mass of freight on the dock, she came forward, accompanied by her two sons, to go aboard the vessel.

Gazing at her eagerly as she approached, Zach, with the detective keenness of youth, noted that her face was marked by lines of trouble, that the rich color had somewhat faded from her cheeks, and that her thick brown hair was already tinged with gray.

Busied with the preparations for her forthcoming voyage, she passed Zach without noticing him.

Yielding to an irresistible impulse, he ran after her. She turned, saw the gawky, half-grown boy, regarded him with an indifferent stare, and was about to go on when, unable to contain himself, Zach stammered, —

“I — you — Mrs. — your name is Blennerhassett.”

“Yes,” she answered indifferently.

“And I am Zach.”

She looked puzzled.

“The mate of the Bouncing Bet.”

"Mercy upon us! Do you really tell me so? You dear child, — and grown to this; yes, yes, to be sure, I see now. You're not much bigger than Harman, after all. So you are alive and well? God be thanked for it, too! for I have often and often thought of you, and reproached myself that I left you to your fate. What, tell me, are you doing here?" with a critical glance at his rough clothes. "And the sailor man, — I forget his name, — an honest soul, he was."

"Sandy?"

"Yes, to be sure."

"He has gone on a cruise, and I — I'm the skipper for Mr. Falconer yonder on Lake Pontchartrain."

"Ah, indeed!"

"And I study besides, with Monsieur Lescomt."

"Study, do you say? Right, my boy! You would make yourself something besides a sailor, then?"

"I — I don't know," answered Zach, blushing.

"Why, after all, should you?" she added, comfortingly. "'T is an honorable calling, and one may rise in it by merit as well as another. For the matter of that, we are trying this very moment to get our own Harman into the navy, which his father thinks the finest profession in the world, and well he may, too! Ah, but it takes great influence, and I am doubtful if we succeed."

"You are — you have been living here ever since?" faltered Zach, at a loss what to say.

"Never a bit, child; we are passing through, 't is

all. We come from Mississippi, where we have just sold our plantation. Ah, we put all the little scrap of a fortune we had left into that venture," continued the impulsive woman, in an outpouring of confidence, as if to a person of her own age. "Yes, all we had in the world, I say, and little enough it was, after — that — that experience. But did you hear of that wonderful man?"

"The commander?" gasped Zach.

"Yes, and how he came forth from that trial where all the greatest lawyers and judges were pitted against him, to say nothing of the government, — how he came forth, I say — how he put them all to shame, and came forth free and unsullied."

"Where is he?"

"In New York, he is. I hope we may soon join him. Ah, trouble has pursued him. He lost all his estate, like the rest of us. Then," with an expressive look, "that other affair. He will never get over that. What matter?" she continued, with a touch of old-time fervor; "misfortune has no power to blight such a spirit. His star will yet rise and shine! Mark my words, dear boy, and remember them well! His day is coming, and it will be a day of triumph! Watch, wait, and be ready, if you would have a part in it! Remember," she concluded, sinking her voice impressively, "a life lost in such a cause is immortal glory gained!"

Interrupted by a querulous call from her husband, the inveterate enthusiast, seizing Zach by both hands, shook them with vigor as she whispered a hurried farewell, and hastened away to join her family.

Zach went back to Basswood very much stirred up by this interview with his old friend. Forgotten hopes, dreams, and ambitions stalked forth like ghosts from their grass-grown graves, and made him feel a hundred years old. One sentence, moreover, dropped by Mrs. Blennerhassett, especially haunted him. "The finest profession of the world," she had said, in speaking of the navy. The words rang in his ears. He repeated them all the way home. He thought of them for days and days afterwards.

On reaching the plantation, he made a discovery which for a time gave his thoughts another turn. Mounting to the loft with wearied steps, he lighted his candle, and sat down with a long-drawn sigh of relief on his pallet bed.

Raising his eyes, they fell upon a familiar object. Before him, perched in an angle of the rafters, sat Elaine.

What was the matter with that Parisian young woman? She wore an unnatural and ghastly aspect!

Starting up, he seized the candle and made an examination. The rats had eaten away her nose, left cheek, and ear!

Zach uttered a lusty oath. He caught up the doll and regarded it with an expression of mingled dismay and remorse. He walked the floor with the mutilated creature in his arms. He went below and paced up and down the dark gallery; then, as if it now were of any avail, he locked up the disfigured pet in the tool-box, and continued his march up and down.

Nor was it wasted, this midnight promenade, as

was shown by next day's action. Directly after breakfast, he went to the superintendent, borrowed a pen and some ink, and spent the day in writing a letter. He began: "My dear Sylvia," and scratched it out. He made many other beginnings, which he likewise scratched out. The subjoined draft, which he finally sent, will afford an indication of his feelings at the moment.

MY DEAR MISS FALCONER, — I must inform you of a great misfortune. It is my fault, and I have n't any excuse. You left Elaine under my charge, and I had oughter took good care of her. But I did n't, and the consequence is she is spoilt. Her nose is eat off by rats. The rats likewise eat off her ear and a part of her face. She looks bad, and I don't think she can ever be mended. I oughter have locked her up in the tool-box, but I did n't. I left her settin' on a beam, and they got her. I am sorry.

Your obed't serv't,

ZACH PHIPS.

Although the writer never received any answer to this letter, it had one result which he little foresaw. It recalled to the absent owner the fact that he had a useless toy on his hands, which in homely parlance was eating its own head off. Accordingly, after some months, Monsieur received from England an order to sell the yacht and discharge her crew.

CHAPTER XI.

HAD Monsieur at all foreseen the effect of the blunt announcement of his news from England, doubtless he would have softened the blow. As it was, directly he noted the look of stupor in Zach's face, — that look which comes over a man or a brute stunned by a sudden shock, — the acute and kind-hearted little man was prompt with his palliatives.

On the whole, he did the best thing possible under the circumstances, in boldly taking the bull by the horns and telling Zach bluntly that this sudden dismissal was really a blessing in disguise. Zach stared, and swallowed a lump in his throat.

"You are getting a big boy," went on Monsieur, frankly. "'Tis time you were seeing something of the world, and looking out for more profitable employment than idling about in a sailboat."

Listening to these plain words, Zach felt something respond within him which proved that the attorney had struck the right chord. So soon as the whirring in his head was stilled, and the ground would stay down in its place, his own good sense came to the fore and confirmed every word that Monsieur had said. Whereupon it only needed some kind assurances of aid and sympathy to send him home feeling quite resigned.

Yet, wresting a human being so suddenly from

his surroundings, like any other act of violence, has disturbing effects. Accordingly, Zach, however reconciled in theory, was in fact greatly moved. He began to realize how much he had leaned upon Sandy, and how confidently he had been counting upon renewing their old relations upon his return.

Thereupon came to mind again the subject of the skipper's prolonged absence, and he began to have misgivings that some ill had befallen his faithful old comrade. Busied with his preparations for departure, he was haunted by the thought of Sandy's coming back from the ends of the earth and finding their old nest deserted. Accordingly, on going away, he wrote him a letter, and nailed it firmly on the outside of the boat-house door.

Another episode, not to be neglected, marked his leave-taking. At the last moment he went to the tool-box and took out the mutilated doll. Looking long and earnestly at the grotesque puppet, he laid it tenderly back in the dark box, and, stifling a sob, he ran out of the house and along the road leading to town, with the look of a hunted animal.

In his desolation he thought again of Mrs. Blennerhassett, and her words came back with new force in this moment of doubt and need. "The finest profession;" he repeated the phrase fifty times on his way to New Orleans, now with a look of hope, and again with a long-drawn sigh as he reflected on the doubts and difficulties in the way.

The navy! What saint or martyr ever pictured heaven half so bright, or thought of it with half so keen a longing, as in those hours of doubt and perplexity Zach pictured the naval service.

Opening his mind on the subject to Monsieur, for want of any other confidant, the skeptical little attorney dryly advised him to try a cruise on a merchantman by way of testing his enthusiasm.

The advice was welcomed, the rather that in this direction no aid or influence was needed. To put his purpose speedily into operation, then, he betook himself to the docks, where, without hesitation, he offered his services to the captain of an American bark loading for the Mediterranean. He was accepted without demur, and presently enrolled among the crew of the *Indian Queen*.

Accordingly, on a certain fair morning not long afterwards, he sailed out of the port of New Orleans, taking with him of his old life, besides certain ineffaceable memories and impressions, a small store of precious books which he had bought with his savings. These, strictly confined as to subject-matter to the lines already indicated, he henceforth carried wherever he went, and in the study of them not only found an availing solace for uncongenial work and companionship, but unconsciously fitted himself for certain larger fields of usefulness the future had in store for him. Protracted by profitable ventures from one foreign port to another, the voyage was much longer than had been expected. More than two years slipped by before the *Indian Queen* set her sails for home. This long interval proved a breathing-spell in Zach's life, a time for vegetation, a wholesome interlude, in which, under simple conditions, his physical forces ripened and toughened for coming strains. Otherwise, save for one incident, it was uneventful.

Nearing the American coast, on the return trip, a sail was seen in the offing, which upon examination proved to be a British cruiser. Although, when sighted, holding an adverse course, on perceiving the American she came about and bore down, as if for a conference. Knowing the two nations to be at peace, Zach was astonished at the behavior of his captain, who, far from evincing any disposition for a closer acquaintance with the stranger, made no secret of his purpose to show her a clean pair of heels. The Britisher, however, was not to be so easily left in the lurch. Shaking out her spare canvas, she came forging down before the wind, overhauling the fugitive league by league. All other signals being disregarded, she presently sent a sharper summons in the shape of a shot from her long gun across the Yankee's bow.

Seeing escape useless, the Indian Queen hove to, and thereupon was directly visited by a saucy lieutenant at the head of a squad of marines, who, despite the indignant protest of the Yankee captain, impressed and carried away a half-dozen of the ablest of his crew, on the pretext that they were British subjects.

Zach, who witnessed this high-handed proceeding, suddenly developed into a very ardent patriot. Hitherto, he had thought of his country only as a place rather barren in heroes and opportunities. Now, somewhat to his amazement, his blood boiled at the indignity which had been offered her before his very eyes.

Talking over the matter afterwards with persons

on shore, he was almost stupefied to learn that the experience of the Indian Queen, so far from being unusual, was an every-day occurrence; that the President and his advisers at Washington knew all about it and had repeatedly taken it into consideration; that they had even gone to the length of complaining to the British minister and protesting that it was a very improper practice. Notwithstanding which, the naughty and intractable British navy went on helping themselves, according to their need, to any promising and able-bodied mariner they could find upon an American merchant vessel.

So much did Zach take to heart this international question that he scarcely heeded the arrival of the Indian Queen in port, or the fact that, after so long a time, he was back again in New Orleans.

On landing, his first care was to present himself before Monsieur, and he was very much disconcerted that his old friend did not recognize him. For the first time he realized what a metamorphosis two years had wrought in him as an animal: that he had grown a head taller, that his figure had spread, that he had lost his rounded outline and become gaunt and muscular, and that, in fine, touched by the wizard wand of development, he had changed from a boy to a man.

Monsieur was kind; he expressed pleasure in seeing his old pupil, he asked many questions, he invited Zach to supper, but somehow it was not quite like the old times. Aside from the question of growth and looks, a change had taken place. Was it in teacher, or pupil? Intangible and subtle as it was, Zach soon solved the problem: in the bright,

penetrating eyes of his old friend he detected, what he had never before noted, a critical look, and realized that he was being objectively weighed and measured.

Puzzling further over this discovery, it presently all became clear. There had indeed been a change, and it was in himself. His condition in life, before uncertain, had now been determined; he was now a professional sailor, and the absurdity of an intimacy between a cultivated, polished man like Monsieur and a rude seaman before the mast became apparent upon a mere statement of the case.

Directly the truth had fully dawned upon him, Zach rose to go. Declining somewhat stiffly the little attorney's offer of hospitality, he took his leave and made his way out to Basswood, where, having already learned from Monsieur that the Falconers were still in England, his first inquiry was for Sandy. It was the old cook, now rheumatic and superserviceable, with whom he gossiped. She said Sandy had been there, had found the letter, and had written an answer.

On hearing this, Zach without loss of time betook himself to the boat-house door, and found the letter. Although somewhat weather-worn outside, it was legible enough within, and as characteristic withal as an April day.

March, 1812.

DEAR BUB. Your letter gin me a setback, for I ben a-hankerin to see ye all the way home, an it took the gizzard clean out of me to find the coop empty. I hadnt oughter left ye behind, I know,

an it serves me right; but the fact is I couldnt stan it no longer. Well, no matter for that; its gon and past and cant be helped; all we can do now is to git our bearings and keep a strait corse the rest of the way. The niggers say youve gon off fore the mast. Well, you done a good thing, I reckon. You'll come back with your eyes pooty wide open at any rate. When be you coming back? You say sunthing bout being gon a year or two, but seein as ther aint no year of our Lord on your letter, that dont help much. If I go off now, like as not you'll be comin back while Im gon an so it'll go. Well, now, that bein the case, I guess the best way'll be for me to loaf round the coste here till you turn up. Im goin now on a little run up to the Chesapeek as secon mait on a coster, an like as not I may round up here agin bout the time youre makin port. So hold hard, an keep your signals flyin.

Your frend

SANDY.

As the letter was several months old, the writer had evidently not returned, for nothing had been heard of him at Basswood. Thereupon Zach was seized with a desire, which quickly ripened into a determination, to follow him. Where, then, and what was the Chesapeake? Inquiry among the sailors soon enlightened him, nor was he long in finding an opportunity to ship as one of the crew of a northern-bound schooner, which was to touch at St. Mary's.

Zach realized with new wonder the extent and charms of his native country as he sailed into the beautiful Maryland bay. Landing, a fresh impulse

was given to these patriotic impulses by the talk he heard about him. There was but one topic, — the continued outrages committed by the British cruisers, and the contemptuous indifference with which all claims for redress were treated by Lord Liverpool and his cabinet. Already there were threatening rumors of reprisal, and, despite the apparent folly of a nation with two or three puny ships presuming to pit itself against the greatest naval power in the world, there were not wanting bold spirits who raised a cry of war.

How that war-cry was caught up by the respectable gentlemen at Washington who presided over the affairs of the nation! Long had they been sitting in suspense, waiting for the popular pool to stir. Those days were troublous times for them. Buf-feted by France, kicked and cuffed by England, and haunted by some very awesome spectres hovering about their own political future, they had long recognized the need for action. The ripe moment had at length come. What better than a foreign war? With whom? What matter? It was but the tossing of a penny. Heads, Johnny Crapaud; tails, Johnny Bull. Tails it is!

The momentous news, echoing in a sibilant whisper down the Potomac, reached Zach at St. Mary's, where his schooner was reloading. The words of Mrs. Blennerhassett flamed up again in his mind. They had long served as his shibboleth; here at last was the touchstone, opportunity, to test their worth. Thenceforth every power of mind and heart were centred upon one object.

Heaven, as it seemed, heard and answered his unformulated prayer. The very next morning after hearing the thrilling report from Washington, word came by accident to Zach that a government frigate was at that very moment lying at Annapolis, a few miles above, taking in stores and shipping a new crew.

Telling nobody of his purpose, he slipped away, and after walking a day and a night over a rough road, he arrived at dawn of the second day in the sleepy seaport of Maryland.

Without waiting to rest or refresh himself, he made his way to the docks, and there, anchored in the bay at the mouth of the river, beheld the object of his search. His heart beat fast as he gazed upon her clean-cut outline, as he noted her tapering spars, her trim rigging, and her port-holes bristling with guns.

Reluctantly, he tore himself away from the engrossing spectacle, to get his breakfast. At the old City Tavern, where he went to eat, a party at a table near him drew his attention. Seated at the head of the board was a stout, florid man in a uniform, whom all seemed to treat with great respect. Inquiring of the waiter, Zach learned with a thrill that it was the captain of the frigate himself.

After breakfast he watched his chance, and with heart in mouth accosted the great man upon whom at the moment he looked as the arbiter of his destiny.

The officer looked him over with a glance at once shrewd and good-natured.

"Join the navy, eh? — what do you want to be, pilot or cook?"

"I want to be a midshipman," faltered Zach, amazed at his own boldness.

"Humph! how old are you?"

"Sixteen, sir."

"You seem a trim, likely boy. Can you read and write?"

"They say I can, first-rate."

"They ought to know, if they say so. Ever been to sea?"

"Yeah, two years afore the mast."

"What do you want to join the navy for?"

"I want to help lick the Johnny Bulls."

"Good! I guess you 'll do. Lieutenant," turning to a young officer at his side, "here 's a new midddy for you; see that his papers are made out!"

A midshipman! With cold hands, a stuffed feeling about the heart, and an overpowering sense of responsibility, Zach came forth from the old inn.

So far it had all been a dream, and not until an hour after, when, rigged out in a cap, a blue jacket, and a dirk, he stepped on board the ship's long-boat to be rowed over to the frigate, did the reality of it take hold on him.

"The Constitution, forty-four guns, Captain Isaac Hull." Zach had read the description on a poster in the tap-room of the tavern; but little did he dream, when he set foot upon the narrow deck, that he was entering upon the scene of heroic and illustrious deeds soon to be achieved.

As little did any of the ship's company, from Cap-

tain Hull down to the lowest of his four hundred and fifty seamen, dream that within a very few days the eyes of the whole country and of keen-eyed watchers all over the world would be fixed in breathless interest upon them and their vessel.

At last all was ready, and one hot July morning they weighed anchor and sailed away down the bay. As, with a certain feeling of exultation, Zach stood upon the deck watching the receding shore, the new life opening before him naturally suggesting the old, he suddenly thought of Sandy. It was for the first time in many weeks. He was astonished at his own remissness, and felt a pang of good, honest remorse. However, it could not be helped now. If Sandy only knew what had happened! If he only knew that it was while in quest of him this new venture had been undertaken, he would forgive all. With these comforting thoughts he fumbled in his pocket for the skipper's letter, and discovered with a fresh pang that it had been left with his old duds ashore.

He was aroused from his musing by a call to duty. He soon found that sentiment was to have no part in his new life. Never before had he realized the golden truth that the present is the only point of time with which a living, breathing man has anything to do. For the rest, action was the regimen, obedience the motto, of all around him. Incessantly, morning, noon, and night, the crew were exercised. Mind and body alike were trained. Far from being chiefly physical, this drill was in the highest sense moral. Discipline, loyalty, confidence in themselves and each other, and abounding faith

in their commander were its victorious and availing results.

Although when the *Constitution* sailed out of Annapolis the whole country was buzzing with rumors of British cruisers hovering along the coast, a week passed without their meeting a sail, — a week in which a mob of recruits was quickly changed into a disciplined crew, in which the ignorance and trepidation of the novice gave place to something akin to the self-reliance and precision of the veteran.

The interval was all too short. Every precious moment of that preparatory time was needed and improved, for the ordeal was close at hand.

Sailing northward, one afternoon, along the coast, the lookout suddenly announced "four sail on the northern board, heading to westward." The sensation caused by this report had hardly abated when a fifth sail hove in sight in the northeast. In the blinding light of the setting sun shining on a dead level with their eyes, the character of the strangers could not be made out. Neither was Zach at all clear whether it was due to design or a shifting of the wind that the *Constitution*, with stay-sails and studding-sails set, wore slowly around to the eastward, so as to approach the last comer.

The situation was in the highest degree dramatic, while, as if to complete and prolong the suspense, night fell like a curtain upon the scene. Presently through the gathering darkness there resounded the fierce roll of the drum calling the men to quarters for action. Heard for the first time, it had a blood-curdling sound, and Zach felt his pulses beat and

his muscles grow limp. It proved, however, only a precautionary measure. Nothing definite was yet known of the stranger. She might prove a friend. To clear up the uncertainty, signals were repeatedly shown by the Constitution, but without result.

The night was long-drawn and anxious. Sleep was unthought of. At daylight the solitary vessel was only half a mile distant on the port tack, the others had disappeared.

So said the lookout, but the report proved illusory. Hardly had the anxious watchers drawn a breath of relief, when there came the startling announcement that the squadron had reappeared in the offing, and were exchanging signals with the solitary stranger!

All doubt was now at an end; their character was revealed: they were all members of the same fleet. Clear, too, was the situation. Like a pack of hounds hot upon the scent, five of the best cruisers of the British navy were trimming sail to run down and destroy one poor Yankee frigate. It was to be a race for life.

For life! Let history tell, and tell again to each succeeding age, how vastly greater was the issue; how it was a race for a nation's honor, a people's welfare, a race run over a boundless course, with no chance of refuge nor hope of succor from heaven or earth, save in the resources of one stout-hearted man!

With bated breath Zach looked at that man. Absorbed, he stood apart upon the quarter-deck, noting every detail of the situation, and silently measuring himself against its uttermost perils, yet with

no tell-tale mark of its strain upon him save the feverish brightness of his eye and the grim resolution of his mouth.

His plan laid, the orders came quick and sharp: a twenty-four pounder was brought up from the main deck and run out aft, reinforced by two long guns thrust through the cabin windows; the whole forming a bristling row of teeth against the bold enemy who should press too near.

Then there fell a calm. All life and motion died out of sea and sky. Pursuers and pursued alike stood paralyzed and impotent, stock-still upon the glassy sea, though frantic with eagerness to go on. It was not for long; the watchful Hull, with a sweeping glance at the sky, ordered out the boats to go ahead and tow. Zach had command of one of these boats, and in his excitement swore like a veteran at his struggling crew, as they strove to drag their noble vessel from yonder sea-hound's pursuing grip. Hour after weary hour they tugged like galley-slaves at their task, spurred on from time to time by the boom of cannon from behind, which showed that the enemy was on their track. For all their toil, the heavy frigate moved but at a snail's pace.

At last there is an order from the vessel; the boats are called alongside; a breeze is coming. Gladly the weary sailors obey the signal. The alert captain has the studding-sails already spread when they come up the side.

Alack, it proves a false alarm. The promised breeze is but a puff, an infant's breath. Instantly the order comes, the sails are furled; the whole

manœuvre has been executed like the opening and shutting of an umbrella.

Again — there is no help for it — the exhausted men are ordered into the boats. It is a struggle against great odds, and notwithstanding every nerve is strained, the enemy begins to gain. Zach looks on with anguish of heart. He glances in despair at the captain. That steadfast official is not yet at the end of his resources.

“Run out a kedge, — quick!” is his order to the sailing-master.

“Forecastlemen, get up a kedge!” bawls the sailing-master, jumping down on the deck. “Pass it on to the first launch! Run up hawser from below and bend it on! Run out ahead! Bear a hand, you lubbers! Jump for your lives!”

The thing is done as if it had been rehearsed. In a trice an anchor is run out far ahead, and the vessel dragged by stalwart hands silently and swiftly over the waveless sea. Again and again the movement is repeated. The expedient avails. Perceptibly they regain lost ground, and the exultant Hull, as he glides away, resists not firing a derisive salute at his pursuers.

His exultation is premature. The watchful enemy quickly catch the trick, and fail not to follow suit. They, too, row, and tow, and kedge, putting, withal, the force of the whole squadron to the task of thrusting forward one ship to grapple with the Yankee.

In the face of a force so overwhelming, the issue could not long be in doubt. It seemed in truth

already a foregone conclusion. Again Hull, with unruffled composure, made ready for action. His intent was clear: that of turning upon his nearest pursuer before the others could come to her aid.

Contrary to all hope and expectation, a little wind sprang up. The American drew away. Again, as through the livelong day, a lurking demon in the clouds above mocked them with vain hopes. The wind was but his cheating breath, and lasted only long enough to raise their hearts.

At last, in the midst of all this doubt and suspense, the interminable day wore to an end. Night came, but brought no rest. The fugitives felt that their enemy, like a tiger in the jungle, was ever crouching and creeping in their rear. They dared not rest a moment on their oars. All through the windless summer night they rowed and kedged, while on the deck the captain kept sleepless watch.

As the third day dawned, the wind freshened; it was like breath in the nostrils of a fainting creature. As if refreshed and strengthened, the frigate pulled ahead, the persistent enemy following hard upon her trail. For the first time the wind fulfilled its promise, for the first time the vessel had a chance to show her mettle. Faithfully she did her part. Steadily she kept her lead. Longer and longer grew the stretch of ruffled water between her and the pursuing fleet. Hope rose high on board the frigate.

Still the unflagging enemy followed on, ready to take instant advantage of any blunder or mishap. They were wise. A crucial moment was at hand.

Far to the west a black spot appeared in the sky. The jaded, haggard captain of the *Constitution* did not fail to note it. The ship was made ready, the officers warned, every man stationed at his post, and not a sail was furled until the squall was fairly upon them. It came and went like a flash, and as it whistled away over the blackened water, out flew the fore and main topgallant sails, and away sped the frigate beyond all possibility of capture.

As the day wore on, one by one the baffled pursuers, out-sailed, out-footed, out-mancœuvred, faded away like ghosts upon the vapory line of the horizon.

CHAPTER XII.

AFTER her hairbreadth escape, the Constitution, still keeping a northward course, made for the nearest port. Upon hearing that Boston was their purposed destination, Zach had an odd sensation of shrinking, caused, doubtless, by the ghost of the old culprit feeling still haunting his memory. Whatever its source, it grew upon him more and more, as, winding up among the shoals and islands of the harbor, they drew near to the town. Unconsciously he fixed an anxious look upon the various harbor-craft they met, as though upon each advancing deck he expected to see the avenging forms of Master Tileston and Marm Dinely.

His suspense, however, was short, for directly after coming to anchor, it was announced by the first lieutenant that their stay in port was to be brief, and that none of the crew were to be allowed to go ashore.

As they lay at a safe distance from land, Zach borrowed a glass and tried to make out his old home. Despite certain obtruding new buildings, he flattered himself that he could distinguish a bit of the southern gable of the house in Salutation Alley and the green swaying tops of the apple-trees in the garden behind. For the rest, the town was at once changed and familiar, what with the disappearance

of Beacon Hill Monument, of divers old landmarks in the shape of windmills, and the erection of several churches and many large buildings towards the South End.

Protected by the stars and stripes waving above him, and by bristling rows of guns beneath, Zach apparently recovered his equanimity, but it was noted that he heaved a deep sigh of relief when, their visit over, they at last weighed anchor and stood down the bay.

Turning northward, they ran along the coast of Maine and skirted the Bay of Fundy, whence, standing out to sea, they presently fell in with a British packet bound for Halifax. Having quickly overhauled and captured her, a prize crew was put on board, and her papers, valuables, and three cabin passengers were transferred to the frigate.

Zach was standing listlessly near the gangway, leaning on the bulwarks, when the prisoners came on board. He barely suppressed an outcry. Nobody, however, heeded his agitation, for his shipmates were too much taken up with the examination of their new prize, the first they had captured. Besides, nothing specially noteworthy had happened: a half-grown girl had quietly walked up the gangway led by a stalwart sailor and followed by a maid and a tall, middle-aged man, in whom Zach had recognized old acquaintances.

With an assurance partly national and partly individual, Falconer, having comforted his daughter, addressed himself at once to Captain Hull, claiming that he was a private citizen engaged in his own

business, protesting that this detention would work him great damage, and demanding that he be allowed to proceed on his way.

Captain Hull might have been excused for smiling at this request, but save for a sly twinkle in his eye, he showed no sense of any humor in the situation as he bluntly expressed his regret, pleaded the exigencies of war, and tendered the hospitality of his cabin to his enforced guests. Falconer showed himself a man of the world by recognizing the situation, accepting the proffered hospitality, and making the best of a bad bargain. Sylvia, the while, stood by, regarding the captain with an expression of unfeigned horror.

After the interview, the trio were shown below. They passed close to Zach. At their approach a deep flush overspread his face, and a wistful, expectant look shone in his eyes. Preoccupied with their own position, the prisoners included him only in the sweeping general glance they cast about the vessel, and passed on without recognition. Zach gazed after them with a dazed look.

It was late in the afternoon, and Sylvia did not appear again that day. To his surprise, and much to the bewilderment of his notions on the relations of captor and captive, however, Zach saw Falconer in the evening pacing the quarter-deck, and engaged in amicable conversation with Captain Hull.

Next morning, Zach was on duty directing the cleaning of the guns in the after-division, when Sylvia appeared on the main deck. Evidently she had already lost her fear of the captain, and was

deep in his good graces, for she held him by the hand, and was chattering away with the utmost freedom, to the manifest delight of the bluff seaman. The pair seemed to be making a survey of the vessel, and the indulgent officer was patiently answering the flood of questions prompted by the girl's eager curiosity.

As they approached the spot where Zach stood, he was seized with an impulse to fly. The unconscious stress of discipline prevailed: he stood by his post and went on with his work.

The two came nearer. Now Zach could hear their voices, now distinguish their very words. It was Sylvia who was talking.

"Truly, are you a Yankee?"

"Yes."

"Then you must be a bad man."

"Why so?"

"All the Yankees are bad."

"What do they do that is so bad?"

"They cheat, and steal, and never tell the truth."

"Humph!"

"Yes, and now they are fighting the king's army and navy; but they will get beaten."

"The poor Yankees! so they are going to be beaten?"

"Yes, because they are such cowards; they always run away."

"It serves them right to be beaten, then."

"Oh, yes, and the king is going to send out some big, strong ships, and catch all the Yankee ships and burn them."

“Whew! and where did you hear all this?”

“In London; everybody there knows it, and papa says so too; so you had better look out. But I hope they won’t catch you!”

“Why not?”

“Because you are not like a Yankee. You are like an Englishman!”

“God forbid!”

“Besides, I don’t want them to catch you, — I like you!” pursued the confiding little maiden.

“Good, good, my dear! Let us strike hands on that! You and I will be friends, and leave the king and the Yankees to fight it out between themselves. Give way there, Phips, and let us pass!”

This command was given to Zach, who stood bending over his task with his back to the approaching pair. Instantly he drew aside, stood erect, and saluted. With a casual glance at him, Sylvia passed along. Presently she turned back for a second look, then stopped and studied him with a scowl of perplexity. Zach colored to the roots of his hair. A flash of intelligence lighted up the girl’s face; she flew towards him, crying, —

“Zach! Zach! Papa! Come quick and see. Here is our Zach!”

Overjoyed at the greeting, but abashed by the presence of the captain, Zach stood, receiving the caresses of his old playmate, unable to answer a word to the incoherent questions she poured forth.

“Why, Zach! Oh, Zach, how came you here? Oh, you are grown up so — *so* big, I didn’t know you; and — your hair is cut off so short, — and you

have that funny cap on; and did you bring Sandy, too? When did you come away? And where is Elaine? Oh, I am so glad! But" — she suddenly checked her enthusiasm, as a thought struck her, — "what are you doing on this ship? Are *you* a prisoner, too? Oh, Zach, have *you* gone and turned a Yankee?"

This appalling suspicion so affected her that she paused, and fixed upon her old friend a withering glance of accusation.

The charge of being a turncoat so touched Zach's pride that he found his tongue speedily enough and answered bluntly, —

"No, I ain't turned anything. I am a Yankee, I always was a Yankee, and I always shall be a Yankee."

Shocked to her heart's core by this avowal, Sylvia stood, unable to say a word. The captain, meanwhile, who had looked on with quiet amusement, now interposed.

"So you know Phips, then, my dear?"

"He is n't Phips, he is Zach. He used to live with us at Basswood, and sail the yacht, he and Sandy; but he was a little boy then, and had long hair, but" — she paused and her lip trembled — "I — I didn't know he was a Yankee!"

Overcome by the shock of this discovery, Sylvia burst into tears, gazing with reproachful eyes upon Zach, as though he had willfully transformed himself into a monster.

Taken quite aback by this outburst, Zach stood, at a loss what to do or say. His perplexity was increased by the unexpected behavior of Hull.

"What do you mean?" he cried, turning upon Zach, "by being a Yankee? Shame upon you! — explain yourself, sir!"

Deceived by the mock severity of the captain's tone,—he had not heeded his words,—Zach began to stammer.

"Tut! tut! don't try to excuse yourself! You ought to be ashamed, I say, of such behavior. Take yourself off, sir, and don't let it happen again!"

Awaking tardily to the humor of the situation, Zach was, yet, a little in doubt how to treat his superior's grotesque command. Evidently he thought it better to err on the safe side, for, saluting awkwardly, he turned to move away. Directly, Sylvia interposed.

"Don't send him away; don't let him go, Captain Hull. I didn't mean to say it. I'm sorry, Zach! Perhaps you can't help it. I hope Elaine has n't turned a Yankee, too."

At this moment Falconer appeared upon deck, and Sylvia ran to drag him to the spot, crying eagerly, —

"Come here, come here quick, papa. What do you think? Here is Zach!"

Showing neither surprise nor pleasure at the announcement, the planter surveyed the well-grown boy in his neat sailor rig deliberately, making the identification complete before speaking.

"So! I'm sorry to see him in this business," with a glance at Captain Hull.

Zach compressed his lips, and strove to dissemble his mortification.

Thereupon, assuming a tone of kindly interest, Falconer asked some general questions about his life and movements since leaving Basswood, and sauntered away, leaving the young midshipman with an indescribable feeling of having been thrust down unnumbered degrees in the social scale by his passing interview with the planter. Unable clearly to analyze this feeling or detect the true causes of it, he yet looked after his old employer with feelings oddly compounded of respect, humiliation, and resentment.

Luckily, Sylvia gave him no opportunity to brood upon this. As of old she demanded his whole attention. If possible, she had grown more despotic than ever, while on his side Zach fell straightway into his former attitude of subjection. Indeed, he evidently welcomed and found comfort in the yoke, and cast wistful glances about when his exacting little friend was long absent from the deck.

Thus for a few days life blossomed again into beauty and sweetness on board this vessel of war. His intercourse with his old playmate was marked by a new element of satisfaction to Zach. He felt and valued the dignity belonging to his new station. The old sense of dependence upon her father had gone, and thus his habitual gravity was mingled with a becoming touch of pride. This little episode was too sweet to last, and accordingly one day it all came to an end, like the shutting of a door.

Having explored the northern waters to no purpose, Captain Hull by and by turned southward. The day after altering his course, the lookout announced a sail in the offing. Whoever she might

be, the stranger seemed bent on coming to closer acquaintance. Her identity was soon revealed: to Hull's unfeigned delight, she proved to be the *Guerriere*, one of the most formidable of the fleet which had so recently given him chase.

Directly, the man was transfigured, — his eyes glowed with exultation, his muscles grew tense against the coming strain. It was at once one of the effects of his temperament and the secrets of his power that his officers and crew in critical moments seemed fired with his spirit.

The drum beat to quarters. Every man hurried to his station. Meantime the two vessels, like athletes in the arena, stripped as it were for action. The *Guerriere* backed her main topsail; the *Constitution* took in her topgallant sails, staysails, and flying jib, took a second reef in her topsails, hauled the courses up, and sent down the royal yards.

With one last glance at the enemy, who, bristling with menace, was awaiting their approach, Zach hurried below to the main deck, where he had charge of one of the guns. In the portentous pause before the conflict began, he bethought him of the prisoners, and remembered with a sigh of relief that an hour before, greatly to the indignation of the planter, they had been ordered to the hold.

Meantime a dull boom announced that the action had begun. Shut in between the decks, with no point of observation but his port-hole, Zach stood rigid with expectation. The suspense was intolerable. Luckily it was short-lived. Presently there came a terrific roar; the vessel shook from stem to

stern. For a moment the earth seemed to have stopped in space and the frigate to be sinking. The enemy, at short range, had simply poured in a broadside.

Zach was appalled. His ears were deafened, his brain ceased to act, a sickening nausea paralyzed heart and hand. In the midst of it all a hoarse cry resounded. Zach's stunned ears could not make out the words. He stared wildly about. Luckily his men heard and obeyed the order. An answering roar was heard: the *Constitution* trembled from stem to stern as she returned, with deadly effect, the enemy's fire. The sound, the action, brought the young officer to his senses, and from that moment he served his gun like a veteran.

Shut in between decks, he could see nothing of what was taking place. He had but to stand and wait. Meantime the frigate, wearing to gain advantage, or yawing to avoid a broadside, seemed like a vast whirling teetotum. By turns, through the port-holes, he caught a glimpse of the enemy's bow or stern, now near at hand, now vanishing from sight.

As the fight went on, every element of doubt and terror combined to dismay the young midshipman: the confused cries and orders and rushing of feet from the upper deck, the crash of spars, timber, and rigging, the shrieks of the wounded, the dread booming of the cannon, the continuous roar of the sea, which, as if eager to join the carnival of violence, boiled up from the depths, filled the port-holes with blinding spray, and fell with a sizzling sound upon the heated guns.

In the culminating awfulness of the moment Zach lost all sense of fear. One instinct alone possessed him: the old brutish instinct to fight. Directly it acquired sway, he became insensible to every other consideration.

The scene yet lacked a climax. Through the pandemonium, rising above the deafening tumult, eclipsing every other terror, came the cry, —

“Fire! Fire!”

Directly a cloud of smoke from the direction of the cabin confirmed the report. In the tumult, the first lieutenant near the companion-way vainly shouted orders which could not be heard. Forgetful of special duties in that dire emergency, Zach ran to help. He arrived, so it seemed, none too soon. In the dim light a row of black figures could be seen handing buckets from pumps on the main deck. Fighting his way upwards through the blinding smoke and drenching floods which deluged the companion-way was a tall figure with a burden in his arms. Halfway up, he stumbled on the slippery ladder and fell. Zach sprang down and took the burden from his arms. He looked hopelessly about for a place of refuge in which to deposit it. There was no spot of safety or quiet in all that hell of conflict. A man passing with a bucket of water, at Zach's request, flung a handful in Sylvia's face. She revived and opened her eyes, but at the sight of Zach bending over her, his face streaming with sweat, blackened with gunpowder, and smeared with blood, she straightway swooned again.

At this moment Falconer appeared. Without a

word, Zach thrust the unconscious girl into his arms and darted away.

Even in the few minutes he had been gone, the situation had changed. Close up against his port-hole lay the *Guerriere*, her ponderous guns at pistol-range. Before he had time to reach his place, fire belched from all these iron throats, the air was filled with cries and groans, the deck was strewn with dying men, flying splinters, disjointed gun-carriages, and an obscene and ghastly litter, while the smoke, heat, and stench in the confined space were well-nigh intolerable.

It was a soul-trying moment. There and then Zach received his baptism of fire, and it is much to say that he came forth from the ordeal alive and sane.

Brushing the obstacles from his path, he flew to his deserted post. Half his own men had been swept away. The gun next him was silenced. The lieutenant in command had fallen. It was no time to hesitate, or wait for orders. There was but one thing to do: to return the blow of the enemy before she could wear out of range.

With the aid of his half-disabled men, he loaded and pointed the two guns. The British frigate, fearing the coming retribution, was struggling with might and main to escape, but as if for the moment animated by a malign intelligence, the *Constitution* held her fast in a death-grapple.

Opportunely, a new officer arrived. The word was given, the match applied, a sheet of flame for a moment lit up the doomed vessel. Then came a

crash. A cheer resounded from the upper deck. The cry was echoed through the vessel, —

“Down goes her mizzen-mast!”

Another trampling was heard above. A chorus of oaths and shouts and orders from the sailing-master and the first lieutenant filled the interval.

“Fire! Fire!”

“Give her hell!”

“Helm aport!”

“Down goes her main yard!”

“Hurrah!”

“Man the starboard guns!”

“Fire! Fire! Look out for her bowsprit! Foul again! Stand by to board!”

“Marines repel boarders!”

“Fire!”

“Boarders away!”

A sharp rattle of musketry, a rush of feet, and then came louder cheers. The triumphant cry reached the anxious gunners below.

“He’s down!”

“Who?”

“The British cap’n!”

“Dacres?”

“Ay! ay!”

“The day is ours!”

“Hurrah! Hurrah! Hurrah!”

The two ships, working around, fell apart. Directly, the *Guerriere*’s foremast and mainmast tumbled overboard on the starboard side, leaving her a helpless wreck.

The fight was over. The *Constitution* ran off to

the eastward and lay to. With nimble hands the tired but victorious crew fell to work repairing the havoc done to their stanch frigate.

On the quarter-deck, the panting hero who commanded her stood mopping his forehead and casting back a significant look upon his victim. Secure now of possession, he took his time, and not until order was in some sort restored, stood under her lee to receive the formal surrender.

CHAPTER XIII.

AT one blow, down went the prestige of the British navy, — the spell of invincibility was broken. Captain Hull and Lieutenant Morris were a little dazed at their good luck, — they dared not call it by any other name. Two victories in the short space of a few weeks might well have turned the heads of such inexperienced conquerors. Nor even yet did they dream of the moral significance of their exploits. It was not until they arrived in port and witnessed the delirious joy of their countrymen that they awoke to the truth that they, in their proper persons, were out-and-out heroes. Nor did Zach himself, although so long in quest of some modern instance of such a worthy, ever think of consulting his looking-glass. Unhappily, as will presently appear, he was to be cheated of his well-earned share in the coming triumph.

With the return of quiet and order, the prisoners duly reappeared upon deck, but with altered demeanor. Falconer, perhaps, had not forgiven the rigorous treatment he had received at the hands of the captain, while the effect of the late experiences upon Sylvia was still more noteworthy. She regarded Hull with unfeigned terror, and turned away from Zach on his first approach with a look of genuine abhorrence. His submissive air, his quiet attentions, were of no avail; they were but tricks and

glozes; the fiend within him had been revealed. Disturbed by this very unusual behavior, Zach pondered over it, and came to his own conclusions. Watching his opportunity one day, when Sylvia had strayed a few paces from her father's side on the upper deck, he approached cautiously, and having arrived within earshot without being perceived, turned his back so as not to excite alarm, and began:—

“I come here to *say* somethin' to you.”

Sylvia started, and made a move to go.

“And I want you to stand right still where you be, and listen.”

The firm tone in which this was said had its effect. The listener hesitated, and lingered.

“If you 're actin' like this 'cause we licked the Ger'reer, I just want to tell you it ain't our fault.”

Sylvia made no comment, but regarded intently the averted head and the sinewy, vigorous figure of the speaker as he leaned against the taffrail.

“The Johnny Bulls come over here from England to fight us, an' you don't think but what we 're goin' to lick 'em if we can, do you?”

There was no answer, and the speaker, encouraged by the hearing he had gained, went on, —

“They ben stealin' our men, an' stoppin' our ships, an' tramplin' round on the Yankees long enough, an' I guess they'll find they got to stop. An' I just want to say if you 're such a Johnny Bull that you hate anybody 'cos he's a Yankee, all right! You can go on actin' so, that's all.”

This speech was not much in the way of rhetoric,

but it was pronounced in a new and masterful tone which distinctly charmed while it startled the hearer. Was this her old-time thrall speaking? Was this the ragged little boat-boy of Basswood, her father's hireling? She was dimly conscious of something behind the mere words which had been said, of claims to recognition, claims to independence, claims to equality, if not superiority, which, in their sudden development, puzzled her girlish wits.

Busied with these thoughts, she waited for him to speak again. He had said his say, however, and remained silent.

She gazed at him wonderingly, as he stood with his side face in relief against the white background of the mizzen, unconsciously impressed by its inflexible maxillary outline.

"What have I done?" she asked falteringly.

"You've ben offish!" The retort was prompt and sharp. "And I say, suit yourself! Go on, an' be as offish as you like!"

Sylvia checked a movement to speak. A sudden change came over her face, softening the eyes, relaxing certain seldom-used little muscles, blooming in a fleeting glow upon her cheeks, and giving to her whole expression for a moment the maturity of womanhood. Then with a sudden resumption of her old impetuosity, she sprang forward, saying, —

"Don't say any more such silly things! I am not a Johnny Bull, or if I am, I don't want the Yankees to be beaten. I don't want anybody to be beaten, and I don't want to see any more fighting — ever — ever — ever! Oh, I never thought any-

thing could be so dreadful. And you — I woke up last night and screamed for papa; a horrid bugaboo was coming after me, and he had a face just like yours when” — She finished with a shudder.

Zach listened with a look half flattered, half abashed.

“If I ever see you look like that again, I would n’t — I could n’t come near you any more!”

This little understanding had the effect of bringing back their intercourse to its old familiar footing. Having upheld the dignity of a midshipman by boldly asserting his rights and defining his position, Zach straightway proceeded to stultify himself by yielding unconditionally to the boundless caprice of his old playmate, but always, as will presently appear, with a saving of duty.

One morning the idlers on deck were startled by a cry from the lookout, “A sail on the starboard quarter.”

The excitement which followed was speedily quieted by the discovery that it was only a merchantman. The *Constitution*, with the wind on her port beam, ran down upon the stranger in good style, and captured her without so much as a flash of gunpowder.

The prize having a valuable cargo, Captain Hull decided to convey her into harbor in his train. A prize crew was detailed, and casting about for a fit person to put in command, the captain singled out Zach.

It was a proud moment for the young midshipman. A little incident made it memorable. Falconer

stood by when he came to get his orders. Glancing neither to the right nor to the left, however, the young officer saluted, and marched away to take possession of his charge.

Fifteen minutes afterwards, as he stood at the head of the companion-way, waiting to be put on board the merchantman, Sylvia, who had just heard the news, came rushing up.

"Oh, Zach, is it true? Are you really going? Do not! Please do not! Ask him to send somebody else!"

The preoccupied midshipman lent only half an ear to this appeal.

"Zach, do you hear? Tell Captain Hull to send somebody else. Do not go!"

"Poh, poh, I shall be in sight all the time. I must keep company with you, or I may be recaptured by the enemy."

"Oh, but if we get out of sight of you?"

"I shall follow my course."

"You may not come to land until long after we do."

"Very good, I will come in at my leisure."

"Then we shall be gone."

"Eh!" The hearer's preoccupied eyes were turned towards the fore-castle.

"Papa will set off for Nassau the very minute he puts foot on shore."

For all reply to this argument, the impatient midshipman stepped forward, and shouted some order to his lagging crew.

"Don't go, Zach!"

“I must.”

There was a crisp inflexibility to this answer which discouraged further appeal. With streaming eyes, Sylvia turned and walked away to the cabin, to avoid seeing the departure. Her emotion and movement were alike unheeded by the anxious young officer.

But Midshipman Phips found it not so easy to keep company with his convoy; a storm arose in the night, and they lost sight of each other. Driven furthermore from his course by contrary winds, he was glad enough to make the nearest port at hand. This proved to be New York.

As his ship had suffered much damage, he took the responsibility of disregarding his orders to report in Boston, and forthwith forwarded to that town news of his arrival.

An answer came back by return mail to have the prize condemned and sold in New York, to ship his crew to Boston, and report there himself so soon as the business connected with the prize was dispatched.

Here was a new business, in which he was profoundly ignorant. In his perplexity he dreaded to set foot on land; the perils of the sea seemed slight and intangible compared to the insidious pitfalls of the shore.

Pondering the matter, there came to mind what Mrs. Blennerhassett had said about Aaron Burr. It was a straw, and he caught at it.

Setting on foot inquiries, he soon learned that the ex-conspirator was indeed in the city, and engaged in the practice of his profession.

Zach had no difficulty in finding one so well-known. Arrived at the office, he entered with something of his old childish feeling of awe towards its inmate. It was a small, rather dingy room, ill-lighted and meagrely furnished, with an indefinable air of having been long given over to dust and cobwebs. At the far end, near the window, sat the redoubtable little figure of other days, still erect, still trim, still graceful in outline. Zach advanced a few steps and paused. Remembrances of the great conspiracy, sensational rumors, strange reports, wild tales, not a few of which had since come to his ears concerning the remarkable person he was about to confront, stayed his steps and embarrassed his greeting.

Burr raised his head; the face was calm and cold, and the eyes seemingly as brilliant as of old, but the figure, — what had happened to that? Had it shriveled with age, or had Zach forgotten how small it used to be?

A little touch of suspicion showed in his face when Zach announced himself as a former acquaintance. It was gone in a moment, however, and the commander rose and received him with impressive courtesy. The manner, indeed, had all its old stateliness and charm, but in jarring contrast to this personal elegance Zach was pained to see that his coat was threadbare, and his linen soiled and ragged.

Far from showing any elation, however, on learning Zach's errand, he entered upon his docket the minutes of this very profitable piece of business with the admirable unconcern of one to whom it was an hourly duty.

Their business finished, the attorney invited his new client to dine. For obvious reasons Zach would gladly have declined, but fearing to wound the sensibilities of his inviter, reluctantly accepted. Adjourned to a neighboring restaurant, moreover, he speedily forgot all scruples, charmed with his host's irresistible hospitality and inspired with a sense of confidence in his unlimited resources. The dinner in the way of meat and drink was the best that the house afforded; for the rest, rising triumphantly above every disadvantage of surroundings, his host succeeded in investing it with a tone of elegance quite new to the guest's experience. The talk, too, was not to be forgotten. It consisted, for the most part, of criticism upon public men and affairs. Although startled by the boldness of many of the sentiments, the hearer was at the same time disarmed by the inimitable manner in which all was pronounced, — a manner not only without heat, without undue emphasis, without volubility, but so combining calmness, audacity, and sententiousness, as almost to compel assent.

The feast over, Zach noted with concern that his host had a long and mysterious discussion with the waiter, followed by a longer and more earnest one with the proprietor himself. Whatever its purport, it ended pacifically, and the host came back to his guest with a look of satisfaction. As they afterwards strolled down Broadway, Zach remarked that his companion seemed not to notice the many curious glances cast at him. Zach at first attributed this to preoccupation, but changed his mind later. A

richly-appointed carriage drove up to the curbstone, and a large, important-looking man stepped out in their very faces. A fleeting look of recognition passed between the two. Burr bowed with effusiveness; the other, gazing directly at his former friend, with deadly disregard passed on without returning the courtesy.

Quivering with indignation, Zach turned toward his companion, but was amazed to see upon his face no trace of annoyance or mortification. Thereupon a sickening thought came to him: such insensibility could only be the result of a long acquaintance with contumely. They stopped at last upon the corner of a small street running out of Broadway. About to take leave, Zach lingered to discuss some forgotten detail of the business connected with the prize. Leaning upon the stall of a dealer in second-hand books, Burr explained the point, the while idly thumbing a volume upon the stand. The watchful trader at once came forward.

“I can let ye have that, mister, at a bargain; a rare edition, fine type, half calf, not a crack in it, an’ with a portrait, — see!”

Without allowing time for protest, the zealous salesman opened to the frontispiece and displayed a speaking likeness of the subject of the biography.

As he glared at the opened book, an inarticulate noise like a gasp came from the beholder. He strove to speak, but as if choked by a sudden dryness of the throat could not bring forth a word. His skin visibly changed in hue from its normal pallor to a greenish yellow, while to the measureless astonish-

ment of his client he turned with a hurried gesture and slunk away around the nearest corner.

Attracted by an exclamation from the bookseller, Zach looked down, and his eyes for the first time fell upon the book. There was nothing extraordinary about it: the life of a distinguished statesman, well-known as one of the framers of the Constitution. What then, — stay! Presently there came thronging to mind confused remembrances of some old tragedy in which the commander had part. And was this, then, the — a plague upon his memory, with her mists and fogs! The one vivid impression upon his mind in connection with the event was the word *Hoboken*, a name odd and uncanny to his New England ears. Pondering the matter on his homeward way, he was haunted by that solitary figure in the dingy office, the askant looks of the populace, the brutal affront of his fellow-citizen. What meant it all? Oh, dread whirligig of Time! Had, then, the far-reaching shadow of that wild *Hoboken* cliff fallen upon the strange man who had just left him, fallen nevermore to be lifted, blackening his pathway and blighting his life to the end of time!

Zach did not go again, for several days, to consult his lawyer, and then learned to his dismay that in the matter of his prize a claim had been put in that she was a neutral bottom carrying goods not contraband, and that the suit would be stoutly contested.

In effect, the matter resulted in a prolonged litigation, which kept the disgusted midshipman indefinitely in New York. Meantime he was amazed

at the prodigious stir made about the little affair between the *Constitution* and the *Guerriere*. The whole country rang with jubilations. It was maddening to be absent from the dear old frigate and his fellows at such a time. In the midst of it all came the stupefying report that Captain Hull had resigned. Resigned, and for a cause so puerile, — to be married! It was incredible. Although service on the *Constitution* under another commander could hardly be conceived, he nevertheless longed to be back. Already sufficiently enraged at the law's endless delay, he was driven quite beside himself by the fast succeeding reports of the glorious victory of Decatur, captain of the *United States*, and of the sailing of the *Constitution* from Boston on another cruise.

He felt slighted and neglected, checked in his career, and cheated of his rights. He was hardly appeased by the news that Hull and Decatur were coming to New York to take part in a grand glorification over their victories, and that Congress had munificently ordered fifty thousand dollars to be divided among the officers and crew of the *Constitution*.

Amid the clangor of bells, the booming of cannon, and the huzzahs of the multitude, the heroic pair duly arrived. Zach lost no time in waiting upon his old captain, when it transpired that, after all, he need not have stayed dancing attendance upon the courts, but might as well have gone off with his ship on her new cruise. The unflattering truth appeared; he had simply been forgotten. His out-

raged feelings were not assuaged by Captain Hull's kind commendation of his fidelity, nor by the payment to him of his share of the money voted by Congress to the officers and crew.

He stuffed the roll of bills in his trousers pocket, and on reaching home tossed it contemptuously on the table. Coming upon it, however, next morning in a cooler mood, he bethought him to count it, and uttered a cry of astonishment.

A thousand dollars! A thousand, and all his own! It was the wealth of the Indies. What to do with so vast a sum!

Quite at a loss to decide for himself, he resolved to consult his lawyer, and thereupon remembered that he had an appointment to meet Captain Hull at Burr's office at midday.

"A thousand dollars!" There was a momentary kindling in the lawyer's eyes on hearing the amount. "A large sum to carry about in your pocket!"

"I don't know what else to do with it."

"You are unskilled, perhaps," went on the attorney, regarding his young client with critical attention, "in making investments?"

"I never had any to make; that's why I have come to consult you."

"Humph! I have myself in years past done a good deal in that way," with watchful eyes still fixed upon his client, "and if you want" —

"Yes, yes, I do. I would like to have you take and invest it."

"I might try," with a careless little wave of the hand.

Without further ado Zach drew forth the crisp banknotes from his pocket, smoothed them out, and extended them towards his counsel, who stretched forth his hand to take them.

At that moment the door opened quickly, and the burly figure of Captain Hull appeared on the threshold.

Burr's face, long disciplined in every school of dissimulation, remained immovable, but his nerves were no longer what they had been, and thus the sudden entrance of this keen-eyed stranger discomposed him. He withdrew his hand with a perceptible start, but directly recovering himself, said in a tone of nonchalance,—

“Another time, Mr. Phips, — to-morrow, — whenever you like. There is no haste.”

Zach looked puzzled, but made no comment, and introduced his superior.

An hour afterward, when, having accompanied the captain home, Zach turned to take leave, he received this significant parting advice:—

“My boy, I saw you having some money transaction with that man yonder. I don't ask any questions. I don't want to know anything about it, but I'll whisper this word in your ear; all lawyers are landsharks. Keep out of their jaws!”

Making due allowance for the bluff sailor's prejudice, Zach took to heart the warning, and pondered it as he strolled leisurely homeward. Startled out of his reverie by a heavy slap on the shoulder, he looked up and recognized an old acquaintance, who proved to be no other than the midshipman from the

frigate *United States* whom Decatur had sent to carry to Washington the news of his victory, now on the way back to rejoin his ship.

Pining as he had been for congenial society ever since he came ashore, Zach was delighted at the encounter. With their pockets full of prize money, exhilarated by the spirit of jubilation in the air, these two boon companions spent the evening in congratulations. To be quite frank, it may as well be confessed, they made a night of it.

Neither of them, next day, could recall clearly the events of that memorable night. There were confused remembrances of a theatre, of a riotous supper, and of finding themselves seated before a green table playing some game of chance, in which they were relieved of much of their money. Confused, too, was their recollection of the fracas which followed, save that some sneering civilian had reflected upon the navy, for which Zach's friend had promptly knocked down and otherwise roughly handled him. Thereafter, in some inscrutable way, the police had appeared, seized upon the assailant, and dragged him off to the lock-up, Zach boozily following after, swearing incoherent vengeance upon the minions of the law.

Left alone in the silent streets, one thought only recurred to his muddled wits: to find his old commander, who had been to him so long a prototype of invincible nerve and unfailing resource. Happily he had been before to his lodgings, and knew the way.

Although not literally "the worst inn's worst

room," the former Vice-President of the United States was found in sufficiently humble quarters. After much pounding on the door and shouting, Zach was at last admitted by a half-clothed person, who objected in emphatic terms to having his household disturbed at such an unseemly hour. Royally indifferent to his strictures, Zach demanded to see Colonel Burr, and was profanely directed to the top of the house.

Blundering up the narrow, crooked stairs, Zach knocked at the first door he came to. Receiving no answer after repeated summons, he lifted the latch and flung open the door. His tipsy hardihood faltered before the spectacle disclosed.

At a table, dressed in a faded wrapper, sat Burr, an open letter in one hand, in the other a miniature of a child, on which his tearless eyes were fixed with a look of pitiable anguish. From his face the pride, the self-sustaining force which had held him stiffly up against so many slings and arrows of outrageous fortune, all gone, he seemed like one in a state of collapse. Looking up and noting his visitor, he stared at him blankly, but showed no surprise, and uttered no greeting.

Obtusely, Zach went on and told his errand. The hapless man heeded nothing of it. At a loss what next to do, the intruder stood staring at the floor, when Burr, suddenly rising, handed him the letter.

Despite the fact that everything about him was still in a state of unsettled equilibrium, by catching here and there a floating line or phrase, Zach made out the date, Charlestown, at the top, the name,

Alston, at the bottom, and the gist of the sad announcement between. He remembered, then; Mrs. Blennerhassett had often told him how the bereaved man had idolized this one grandchild, Theodosia's son.

"Gone — gone — gone — gone," repeated the mourner, gazing at the miniature; "all I had, — all that could reconcile me to this," with a wave of the hand that pathetically included the whole sordid, grinding routine of his existence.

The visitor was sobered. Rallying his wits, he clumsily expressed his sympathy, and with a muttered apology for his untimely intrusion turned to withdraw.

Aroused by the movement, Burr asked if he had any errand, whereupon Zach repeated his story.

Recalled to himself by this practical appeal, Burr reflected a moment, and promised to be present next morning on the arraignment of the culprit.

Zach, meanwhile, awaiting with anxiety this assurance, toyed with a trifle which he had mechanically picked up from the litter on the table. Unconsciously, as he talked, he had carried it several times to his nose. Rising now to go, and noting the lodger's glittering eyes fixed upon him with a peculiar expression, he threw the article down: it was a woman's glove perfumed with musk.

Next morning, true to his word, Burr appeared in court in behalf of the unruly midshipman, and by dint of his admirable skill and persistence succeeded in getting the young man released upon bail in a sum far less than that at first set by the court. Zach

stepped promptly forward as bondsman, and deposited the amount required as security, which, be it said, the grateful culprit failed not to make good to his friend the moment they reached Burr's office.

"And now, sir," demanded the defendant of his counsel, "what do you think are the chances?"

"The chances," calmly returned his counsel, "are that you will be sent to serve a term in the penitentiary for assault and battery."

"Is there no way to get out of it?" grumbled the dismayed offender.

"Yes."

"Eh — what?"

"The amount of bail, thanks to your counsel, is very small; divided between you two, it would be but a bagatelle."

"Well?" breathlessly.

The two ingenuous clients stood staring at their counsel, who, returning them a very significant look, remained silent.

"What do you advise us to do?" demanded the obtuse pair in chorus.

"Gentlemen," answered their imperturbable counsel, drawing a snuff-box from his pocket, deliberately taking a pinch of the fragrant dust, and daintily dusting his fingers, "I — advise — you — to — think — it — over."

"To be sure," cried the defendant, suddenly; "I see, — I know. What fools we are!" and he whispered in Zach's ear.

Ardently the two thanked their ingenious adviser, and took their leave. Reaching the street, they

found the town ringing with the news of another great victory gained by the Constitution.

Unable longer to restrain himself, Zach bade good-by to his friend, hurried around to pay his parting respects to Captain Hull, and before the day was an hour older, was on his way to Boston to rejoin his dear old frigate.

CHAPTER XIV.

ARRIVED in Boston, Zach found himself in a low and self-condemnatory state of mind. He reflected with abasement that his final exploits in New York were not in line with certain heroic models secretly nourished by him. How well for hero-worshipers that the lives of their models are not more closely written! Floundering thus in a quagmire of discontent, he looked askance upon all mankind, as if sullenly holding society responsible for his own backsliding.

With regard to Boston he was surprised to find his feeling quite changed. Aversion had given place to curiosity and interest. This revolution of sentiment had gone on unconsciously, even-paced, with the physical revolution which had brought the virile look to his bronzed face, the hardened muscle to his arm, the deepened tone to his voice, and the down to his lip. With regard to his own kin, assuredly he had no longer anything either to fear or to expect. Deep in his heart, indeed, he may have had a feeling of superiority to that household in Salutation Alley, with its bounded horizon and its narrow interests.

To whatever cause due, it was at any rate with a look of resolution which betrayed no shrinking that, on the day after his arrival, he set forth for the North End. Halting at Dock Square, he turned

for a moment into the old Brasier Inn, where he had taken refuge on the day of his flight. Thence pursuing his way by the selfsame route followed on that memorable day, he found himself at last in Salutation Alley. Alack for the recollections of childhood! What a shabby little place it had become! Everything had wofully dwarfed. Nature itself had dwindled; the bay had narrowed to half its former size; the peninsula had contracted; the garden had squeezed up to a sorry little patch. Nothing, it seemed, but the boundless ether and the inaccessible sky remained unshrunk.

Filled with these thoughts, Zach made his way to the honest maltster's door, — how humble and forlorn it seemed!

Pausing a moment on the cracked slate-stone step, he at last sounded the knocker. The door was opened by a half-grown girl, evidently, from a certain Dinely cast of features, one of his step-sisters. She surveyed him with curiosity not unmixed with awe, the effect, no doubt, of his uniform. He asked for Mr. Phips. The girl nodded, made way for him to enter, led the way into the little parlor, and incontinently disappeared.

Zach rubbed his eyes and looked about. Should he trust old remembrances or present impressions? Mechanically he put up his hand and touched the ceiling. Could, then, this dark, barren, low-browed little space be the room which aforetime he had held so grand, so sacred, so awful? There could be no mistake. Faithful memory verified every paltry detail: the braided rag mats on the painted floor;

the stiff little sofa and four mahogany chairs covered with haircloth; the bare, whitewashed walls, adorned with cheap prints of Washington and Jefferson; the mended china vase filled with dried grasses on the narrow mantelpiece; the framed sampler hanging above, setting forth the Beatitudes in faded worsted, the handiwork of Rebecca Dinely at the age of eighteen; the cold, bare little hearth; the fireplace filled with asparagus-boughs; the jealously-drawn green paper shades, giving everything within a livid hue; all these were, indeed, the identical objects of long ago, and the old feeling of trespass stole over him as he sat on the hard little sofa awaiting the result of his summons.

The distant slamming of a door and the sharp tones of a well-remembered voice made him move uneasily in his seat. Presently a blundering step was heard in the passage, and directly the door opened and his father came in, hat in hand, awkwardly smoothing his front locks. He had aged a good deal, more than Zach was prepared for; old lines had deepened in his face; many others had been added, all disfiguring in that they were the script of small thoughts and sordid cares. Noting these effects with only a dim suspicion of their causes, Zach was perceptibly shocked. He had remembered his father as a grave, quiet man. He was disappointed, perhaps, to find that the gravity in him did not stand for dignity, and that a lurking gleam of shrewdness, not to be closely distinguished from cunning, in his small gray eyes was all that saved his face from vacuity.

The maltster stood awkwardly near the door, staring at his visitor without a sign of recognition.

"I guess you don't know me," ventured Zach.

"No-o, I reckon I don't."

"You used to know me pooty well."

"Mebbe I did, but I don't seem ter remember folks as I used ter."

"I 'm Zach."

"What! Our Zach? — thet run away? Ye don't say!"

Whereupon, without another word of greeting or welcome, he stepped into the passage and called excitedly, —

"Mother! Mother!"

A voice answered inarticulately through a closed door.

"Come here!"

Then stepping back into the parlor, the father surveyed his son with curious eyes, saying over and over again, —

"Wall, wall, I never did! It beats all!"

Mrs. Phips came in, betraying a consciousness of her toilet similar to that displayed by her husband, fumbling with the ends of a faded handkerchief which she had hurriedly tied about her neck, and tucking a wandering scolding-lock behind her right ear. Although Zach said not a word, directly her eyes became adjusted to the gloom of the place, she recognized him.

"So ye've come back," was her composed greeting. "I thought mos' likely 't was you."

"I should never 'a' know'd him in the world," put in Mr. Phips.

"I should 'a' know'd him fast enough," was Mrs. Becky's dry comment.

"What ye got on? Is thet some kind of a uniform?" queried the elder Phips.

Zach nodded.

"Ye ain't gone inter the army?"

"No, — navy."

"Ye don't say!"

"An' the best thing ye could 'a' done," said Mrs. Becky, seating herself on the little sofa and leveling her spectacles for a raking survey of her visitor, "though they say it 's an awful place for a Christian to be in, with their swearin' and drinkin' and fightin'. But it takes all sorts o' folks to make a world, an' ef that kind is born, they 've got to live someweres, I s'pose. At any rate, they make 'em toe the mark there, so I reckon ye 've larned how to mind better 'n ye used ter."

Zach coughed uneasily, but did not condescend to answer.

"What ship ye ben aboard on?" demanded his father.

"Constitution."

"What? Not the one that licked the Britishers?"

Zach nodded.

The old man's face flushed with pride, and he regarded his son with a look of undisguised admiration.

"Was you in the fight?" he asked, almost breathlessly.

"Yeah."

The father rubbed his hands and evidently re-

frained with difficulty from expressing his satisfaction in a more demonstrative way. Even Mrs. Becky was moved, as was apparent from her next remark, which betrayed a careful compromise between prejudices.

"Wall, ef ther 's got to be fightin',—an' I s'pose ther hez, ez long as Satan holds his own on the footstool,—I'm glad ye beat 'em! They've ben a-hectorin' an' a-pickin' on us, tell from all 't I can hear flesh an' blood couldn't put up with it no longer. I hope they 'll larn by an' by to mind their own business, an' let us alone!"

"They got enough on 't once afore, you 'd think," put in the old man again, with a wag of his head.

Conscious of one or two faces peeping in at the door, Zach, by way of changing the subject, asked after the children.

"They're w-all enough. Come in, ef ye want ter, but don't stan' there an' gawp!" continued Mrs. Becky, turning towards her offspring, who, thus addressed, withdrew in confusion.

"They're kind o' bashful," said their father apologetically.

"How long you gon' to be here?" asked Mrs. Becky, again addressing her visitor, whether with the purpose of making talk, or of putting to rest a fluttering fear lest the prodigal had come home to settle down at the paternal hearth.

"I dunno."

"Ahem!"

If Mrs. Becky had any hospitable intent, she could not bring herself to further it.

Thereupon followed an awkward pause, and Zach, finding the conversation uphill work, rose and took his cap from the table.

“What, you ain’t a-goin’? Why — er — I — we” —

The worthy maltster dared not complete the sentence which trembled on his lip, but looked helplessly at his wife, who filled the pause with a deprecating cough.

“Yeah, I got a good deal to do,” muttered Zach. The fib would have done honor to a social veteran.

“W-all, now, I got to go down to the malthouse. Guess I ’ll walk along o’ ye,” said his father, with a knowing wink.

It was an old trick. Often and often in the old times, on occasions of discipline, when he dared not interfere, the elder had flashed at the boy this signal of sympathy and understanding. Repeated now to his keener vision, it came with a new significance, illuminating the whole past like a flash-light. It gave him a new thought with regard to his father, a thought that the shy, silent, long-suffering man had some resource of consolation undiscovered, some citadel of character and experience uninvaded, some secret unsuspected and unshared by his vigilant helpmeet.

Already, father and son had reached the door, when Mrs. Becky, thinking, perhaps, it was her last opportunity, and that old offenses had been too lightly condoned, cleared her throat and summed up the past and present in one comprehensive phrase, —

“W-all, for my part, I ’m glad ye hain’t turned

out any wuss. I 'm free to say I didn't see any hopes of ye. 'Tain't no use goin' over it now. 'Tain't no use sayin' what I think 'bout your runnin' away an' never sendin' back no word to say you war n't dead. I don't b'lieve in thrashin' over old straw, anyway. I 'm willin' to let bygones be bygones. I 'm willin' to gin ye all the chance ye can git. Ther' ain't no danger o' yer turnin' out a saint. I don't s'pose ye 've ben inside a meetin'-house sence ye left home?"

Zach disregarded the interrogation point, and for all his indignation could find no rejoinder to Mrs. Becky's shaft. In the old days she had shown herself possessed of an especial faculty for putting him in the wrong, and it was clear she had not lost it. Withal, he went forth from the little cottage with a baffled feeling, with a poignant remembrance of his old attitude of insubordination, with a sense of being still unregenerate. Glancing askance at his father, as they went down the narrow lane, he wondered less at the latter's subdued and deprecating air, and reflected, perhaps, that a man put forever on the defensive must in time acquire the defendant look and manner.

On the way, his father in a measure threw off his constraint, and showed a natural feeling in his son's return. He plied Zach with questions, evinced the deepest interest in his story, and in his turn poured into his son's ear counter confidences, to the effect that he had a large family, that it was hard getting along, that the business was not what it used to be before the General Court began to interfere with it,

that he was getting to be an old man, that he had the asthma, and that, in fine, he was glad he had one son who could take care of himself.

Preoccupied with old recollections, Zach quite unheeded the little note of adroitness in all this, as he followed his father up the worn steps of the malthouse, through the warped door, and in and out among the bins of barley, the vats and brewing kettles, wondering why the peculiar sour odor of fermentation should, so much more effectively than any other sense-association, bring back old scenes and memories.

When, at last, it came time to go, he found it unexpectedly hard to say good-by. A true filial feeling — the first he had ever known — sprang up within him on witnessing his father's unmistakable emotion. The old man seemed to cling to him as if soon expecting to need the support of a younger and stronger arm. After shaking hands again and again, he fumbled for a long time in his pocket, and, with many signs of doubt and hesitation, brought forth at last a greasy wallet, and drawing from it a ten-dollar note, pressed it upon his departing son.

Zach's eyes sparkled. A sudden thought occurred to him.

"No, no. Not for me," he cried. "I have more money now than I know what to do with. Here, you shall take care of it for me!" and drawing forth the remains of his prize-money in a huge roll of bills, he thrust them upon his astonished and delighted father, and hurried away.

Next day, making inquiries about the Constitu-

tion, Zach learned that the now famous frigate was indeed in harbor, but in such a battered condition, after her fight with the Java, as to need a thorough overhauling, that this would lay her up for a long time, and that, meanwhile, many of her crew were shipping on board the Chesapeake, a new frigate just come into port, and greatly manned of men. Falling in with some of his old comrades, Zach was easily persuaded to follow suit.

Going on board the new vessel for the first time, he was cordially welcomed. But experienced, nevertheless, a distinct disappointment. He could neither account for it nor reason it down. Captain Lawrence and Lieutenant Ludlow, to be sure, looked like experienced seamen and able officers, but for the crew, they were a veritable set of landlubbers. As he noted their awkward movements and lack of discipline, and realized that from stern to forecandle there could not be found a spark of confidence or enthusiasm, a heavy homesickness settled down upon the new recruit.

This feeling of distrust was confirmed by numberless little circumstances, as the time for sailing drew near, among which, not to be neglected, was the parting word of his father.

"'Listed agin, hev ye? Seems to me I sh'd ruther 'a' stuck to the old ship. This un may turn out jest ez good, but I dunno. When 'd ye enlist? Not yisterday, I hope?"

"Yeah."

"Moses an' Aaron!" burst out the maltster, — an expletive only resorted to on strong occasions.

“What’s the matter?”

The old man reflected a minute, and modified his tone.

“Wall, ef it’s done, it’s done, an’ th’ ain’t no use cryin’ over spilt milk; but don’t ever do no sech thing agin on Friday!”

Noting the amused look of his son, the elder explained.

“I ain’t a mite superstitious, Zach, but ther’s a good deal more in old signs than folks think. I don’t ever set out ter do anythin’ pertickler on a Friday. It’s hangman’s day, an’ thet ain’t the wust ter be said about it.”

Although Zach did not attach undue importance to this paternal whim, it served to add one more to the depressing influences which attended upon his departure.

Pondering these matters, after taking leave of his father, he wandered around into North Bennet Street. The afternoon was on the wane, and so it chanced that, as he approached the schoolhouse, the door opened and the boys came rushing forth in a riotous mob.

But where were the big boys? Could it be that those of his time were no larger than these? These were but lispers and sucklings.

As he stood looking after the noisy rout, meditating this point, the doorway was filled again, and down the steps, like a ghost of the past, came a spare, old-time figure, — Master Tileston himself, in what seemed the self-same hat and wig, waistcoat and small-clothes, he had worn so long ago.

Supporting his unsteady footsteps with the once formidable cane, he passed slowly on, gazing blankly into the face of his former pupil, who, looking after him with a touch of pity and veneration, wondered how he ever could have stood in such dread of the tottering old man.

Going on board his new frigate an hour later, Zach found the whole ship's company discussing a startling rumor, to wit: that the British frigate *Shannon*, Captain Philip Bowes Vere Broke, was lurking outside the harbor, waiting for them to come out.

Directly, Zach's blood was fired. Doubt and distrust vanished like fogs before the sun. Putting aside all regrets for his old ship and officers, there kindled within him an ardent loyalty for the new. Caring nothing for ways and means, he burned only to rush to the assault of the insolent stranger.

The crew were gathered in knots on the main deck discussing the news, while the officers, shut up in the cabin, decided upon their course. Coming forth, Captain Lawrence was seen to cast his eyes thoughtfully over his raw and undisciplined crew. Whatever inward qualms he had, however, no shadow of doubt or hesitation crossed his resolute face, as with firm step and clear voice he gave orders to hasten the preparations to get under way.

Remembrances of certain late experiences with the *Bonne Citoyenne*, *Espiegne*, and *Peacock* may well have given him faith in his star. Yet, while he shrank not from the conflict, he well knew the odds against him, — knew that he was to engage one of the stanchest ships in the British fleet, com-

manded by a martinet who had drilled his men to move and fight like a machine.

Against every dictate of judgment and prudence, the hapless officer made ready for the fray. No alternative was left him. The hand of fate was in it. Though his star of prestige hastened to a sure eclipse, he must needs go on.

A rumor was spread that the British captain had sent in a challenge for the Yankee to come out. The town was alive with excitement. The whole country-side was flocking to the hills to see the battle, and were capable, in a frenzy of disappointment, of burning the Chesapeake to the water's edge, had her commander shown a moment's scruple in meeting the Britisher.

So one burning midday, under the cloudless sky of early June, the Chesapeake sailed out of the harbor. Far away on the misty horizon stood the waiting enemy. It was like a scene set for a play: the amphitheatre of hills thronged with the breathless populace, the actors entering from right and left. Promptly they entered, and through all the golden afternoon parried and manœuvred, like two wrestlers in a ring. Watchfully they approached, warily played for position. At last came the attack; with foresail hauled up and ensigns flying, the Chesapeake steered straight for her antagonist.

She found herself in the clutches of a giant. The conflict was short and sharp. The hills resounded with the shock of it. With the precision of a machine the Shannon poured in her deadly broadsides. The dazed novices on the Chesapeake were mowed

down like sheep. The deck could not be seen for the flying splinters. The officers fought like men inspired. Undismayed upon the quarter-deck, Lawrence stood amidst the havoc, urging on his panic-stricken crew. His tall figure was a tempting mark, — the fatal bullet came at last.

Zach stood near the companion-way on the main deck, serving his gun, when the stricken captain was brought below. Recognizing the uniform, he hastened to lend a hand. The dying man opened his eyes, gathered his strength, and gasped out five immortal words, —

“Don’t give up the ship!”

Scarcely was the order pronounced when an uproar arose on the upper deck, a marine with staring eyes came flying down with the hoarse cry that Lieutenant Ludlow had fallen, Lieutenant Cox had disappeared, and the enemy were boarding. Leaving his dying captain, Lieutenant Budd called on the crew to follow him, and rushed for the upper deck. Zach followed close upon his heels, but for the rest, hardly a dozen men heard, or, hearing, responded.

Few more appalling scenes ever fell on mortal sight, where amid the blinding smoke, the deafening din, the crashing splinters, the whistling bullets, the dismantled guns, the torn and entangled rigging, destruction raged unchecked; where lying in heaps, dismembered, gory, the dead formed a ghastly rampart, behind which the chaplain, — sole leader left, — at the head of a wavering body of marines, vainly strove to withstand the invading horde.

Into the midst of this, stanchly supporting his lieutenant, Zach rushed undismayed. For a time, possessed by the fiend of carnage, they stood and fought. Nothing could avail against overpowering odds. Hacked by cutlasses, riddled by balls, overborne by the press of numbers, this little forlorn hope, step by step, were driven back, till, weakened by loss of blood, exhausted by incredible effort, one by one they reeled and tottered down the main hatchway upon the senseless form of their commander, — the enemy, to complete his work, firing a volley downward into the weltering heap.

CHAPTER XV.

WITH his few surviving shipmates Zach was carried captive to Halifax, where, between the hospital and the prison, he divided his time until the end of the war. Like other things finite, the war, perhaps the most futile ever waged, had an end,—an end, be it added, barren and unsatisfactory enough, for not a point had been scored. The ostensible issue upon which it had been waged remained unsettled, and American commerce was, as before, left to the impudent invasion of the British press-gang. What wonder that the news of the *ex post facto* victory of New Orleans came like balm to the smarting wounds of national pride, or that the name of Andrew Jackson was bruited to the skies!

Hearing that name on coming forth from his prison at Halifax, Zach, like others of his countrymen, had good cause then and afterwards to remember it. For the present moment it served chiefly to direct his thoughts to New Orleans. More than any other place, that city seemed to him like home. There his happiest hours had been passed; there his dearest recollections centred. Now, ships of all nations were flocking to the reopened port for a share of its cotton treasures.

Whereupon, concluding that there was no present hope of advancement in the service, he duly ob-

tained his discharge, and, making his way to New York, yielded to an inward yearning, and shipped on board the first coaster bound to the Gulf.

For all his warlike experience, he was not prepared for the havoc which had been wrought in the fair Crescent City. He scarcely recognized the once prosperous town. Its individuality was lost. Everywhere the subverting hand of war had been heavily laid. Throngs of soldiers and army-followers, new types of civilians, with long hair and broad-brimmed hats, venting strange oaths and disporting themselves with much swagger, filled the public places. More English, — if English it could be called, — and less French, was heard in the street-talk; and in short, the old civilization seemed not so much replaced, as overlaid, by one new and incongruous.

Wandering hap-hazard, Zach found himself in the neighborhood of M. Lescomt's office, but having reached the door, hesitated to go in. Remembrances of his last visit may have stayed him. A moment's reflection, a glance down at his trim dress, however, decided the matter, and he sounded the knocker. Perhaps he was not unwilling that his old friend should see the change which had been wrought in him, — a change of which he seemed well aware. He may even have counted with satisfaction upon the impression he was about to make, for his face fell, and he was plainly taken aback, when told that the little attorney was absent from home on a visit to France.

Disappointed in missing the only friend he had

in the city, he next made his way out to Basswood. Long before arriving he was filled with misgivings, for all along the road were strewn marks of the destructive occupancy of the invading army. Not, however, until he reached the plantation did the visitor fully realize the blighting possibilities of war. Of that once thriving demesne, of that peaceful, happy home, scarcely a trace was left.

The mansion had been burned, and some earth-works crowned the elevation where it once stood. The offices, the sugar-houses, even the negro quarters, had been swept away. The fertile fields had been laid waste. A litter of all imaginable material — rags, boxes, camp-utensils, rusty weapons, heaps of straw, bones, paper — defiled the once beautiful lawn; while of the fine old trees, the few left standing had been hopelessly mutilated.

Down along the lake-side reigned a worse desolation. The former tangle of vines and shrubbery, which had made the shore a bower, had been burned, the larger trees had been felled, and, together with the planks of the landing, had been used in making a rude abattis; while worse than all, his beloved little boat-house had been converted into a deposit for offal.

Sickened and revolted, he stood and looked about, quite unable to realize that this was indeed the spot where he had spent so many happy and memorable hours.

He turned away with a shudder. Along the gloomy, wreck-strewn road back to the city, he staggered like one in liquor. Things were not at their

best with him. Without friends, without influence, without prospects visible or probable, the last spot of earth with which he had an endearing association transformed into a ghastly waste, it must be confessed the world did not present itself in alluring colors as a place of abode.

Two meagre sources of comfort were left him: one, the thought of finding Sandy; the other, some indeterminate yearnings vaguely associated with the name "Nassau."

Withal he returned to New Orleans in a rebellious mood. Notwithstanding some severe discipline in the past, it was evident that he had not acquired a submissive attitude with regard to life. He must needs be kicking against the pricks. Lacking other confidant, he conversed with himself, audibly and in emphatic terms.

Howbeit, so far from being inclined to mope, he was in a feverish haste to get away from the vicinity, and all reminder of it.

With no call of duty from any point of the compass, that subtended chord of inclination before noted determined the matter of direction. Allowing himself no time for change of mind or purpose, in two hours he was upon the way. It was the first step that cost, and he took it blindly.

Tampa, the nearest point of communication with the Bahamas, he reached like one walking in his sleep, — he never knew how. There he had the good luck to catch a schooner just setting sail for Nassau. Idly, even then, he reflected upon the oddity of her name, little conscious how signifi-

cant it was destined to prove; she was called the Chance.

Chance had thus far been indeed a potent factor in his life. He pleased himself with the fancy of being still chance-led, and would allow no discussion of the question "whither?" and "wherefore?" which reason, or prudence, or some tiresome internal mentor kept striving to thrust upon him.

In this purposeless state he in due time arrived at his destination. One bright morning, in that climate where the mornings are always bright, they wound their way in among the coral reefs, and cast anchor in the bright green waters of Nassau's tiny harbor.

During the voyage, the solitary passenger of the Chance had heard with profound indifference that the little vessel belonged to a worthy Scotch trader — one Alexander Arbuthnot — of Nassau, who had grown rich carrying on a thriving trade with the Florida Indians, exchanging the odds and ends of civilization for their peltry, which he shipped to London at a great profit.

As they tacked back and forth to make the landing, Zach had leisure to study the place. He scanned it with interest while reviewing all he had heard of its history. What was there, then, about this bit of an island which had given it such renown? which had caused it to serve as a football, to be kicked about for a century and more on the historic stage? which had made it so long the stamping-ground of smugglers, the haunt of wreckers, and the stronghold of pirates? He was disappointed to find

in its aspect nothing noteworthy, — neither high mountains, deep valleys, beetling cliffs, nor spreading prairies, to give point to its dramatic story. Never, indeed, had he detected Nature in a mood more humdrum. As for man's part in it, the snug little town presented features no more striking than the open. Architecturally it was as commonplace as might be, with only the two forts to the right and left, and a feeble sprinkling of cupolas and steeples between.

On nearer acquaintance, as the new-comer soon found, Nassau, like many an unpretentious human being, disclosed a distinct charm. Although, as a whole, monotonous and unimpressive, oddly enough its chief features, the vegetation, the buildings, and the humanity, were markedly picturesque. Other things, too, there were, to please the fancy and haunt the memory: the streets abounding with sharp shadows, beyond which the sunshine lay white and still on the hard coral pavement; the high, cream-colored garden walls, which here and there had taken on with time wondrous tints of olive and bronze; the floral treasures within those mysterious closes, — scarlet poinsettias, the deep-red hibiscus, pink and white oleanders, orange-flowers, roses of every hue gleaming forth from a dark background of palmettos, bananas, and cocoanuts, above which here and there towered majestically a royal palm, suggesting in its stately grace a Moorish turret or Indian minaret, — here was a feast for every sense.

Rounding up at last to the landing, Zach beheld, among the motley crew of half-naked negroes

awaiting them, a remarkable-looking man. Notwithstanding his snow-white hair and beard, he had a noticeable air of vigor, while seen nearer at hand, his countenance proved impressive for its very unusual blending of shrewdness and benevolence.

Turning to take a second look at the stranger before moving away, Zach heard the skipper address him as Mr. Arbuthnot.

At that day, as now, Bay Street, a long, winding way, following the sinuosities of the shore, formed the principal thoroughfare of the town. It was then open on one side to the harbor, and here, in a decent lodging-house over a shop facing the water, Zach for a time found quarters.

Making no acquaintances and asking no questions, he set about exploring the town for himself. It was not a formidable undertaking, and in two or three days he easily became familiar with its chief streets and buildings.

Was this what he had come for? His curiosity satisfied, was he now ready to go away? Evidently not, for he lingered, on, — lingered, apparently, to no purpose. Worse than that, he was getting demoralized. He dawdled about his lodging-house from morning till night, in a limp state of irresolution. He looked, moreover, like a man hopelessly at odds with himself, and thus incapable of positive or consistent action.

Happily, it is needless to conjecture the upshot of this fit of moral prostration, for chance again stepped in to his relief. Coming home one day from a long jaunt through Grantstown, one of the negro quarters,

he was met by the announcement that a gentleman had been to call upon him.

"See," continued his zealous landlady, fishing a crumpled note from her pocket, "he wrote a word for ye upon this bit of paper!"

Unfolding the note, Zach began to read it with an air of idle curiosity. Upon coming to the signature, the blood suddenly surged over his face, his eyes kindled, and turning back to the beginning he re-read it with a look of great agitation.

There seemed nothing in the note to justify such unusual interest. It contained at the most a dozen lines, and was to the following effect:—

DEAR SIR, — Hearing by accident that you are lately arrived from New Orleans, I take the liberty of calling upon you, as I am very desirous of learning something of the state of that town. You will confer upon me a great favor by sending word when I may have an interview with you, or by calling at my house, corner of East Hill and Parliament streets, any day from ten to twelve o'clock in the morning. Trusting soon to hear from you, I am

Very respectfully

Your obedient servant,

STEPHEN FALCONER.

A perfectly natural thing had happened: on an island cut off from regular communication with the rest of the world, the arrival of a stranger is an event which makes a stir out of all proportion to its intrinsic importance. Thus, it coming to the ears of

the planter, then very anxious about the welfare of his possessions in that quarter, that a stranger had arrived from New Orleans, he naturally lost no time in hunting him up.

Not being island-born, Zach doubtless attached undue importance to this summons, and it is to be feared he went to wait upon his old employer in a state of very unnecessary agitation.

The house, quite the finest private residence in town, situated as described in Falconer's note, and fronting the harbor, had a spacious garden sloping down to Shirley Street, and extensive outlying grounds towards the east, planted with oranges, lemons, bananas, and cocoanuts. It was a large and impressive structure, built of white coral limestone, adorned in front with four majestic Doric columns, and having wide verandas shut in by jalousies on the eastern and southern sides.

Passing through the high stone gateway, Zach walked up the gravel-path, and paused suddenly at sight of a pony chaise drawn up before the front entrance. Having assured himself by a second glance that it was empty, he walked nervously up the long flight of steps to the front veranda, where, looking about for some means to announce himself, he presently found a small silver bell on a shelf beside the door, which he duly rang. After a dignified delay, a slave slowly emerged from the story beneath, stepped out upon the path, and looked up for an observation. After taking a leisurely and thorough survey of the visitor, he reëntered the house, and in due time appeared at the door.

Having stated his business, Zach was shown into a large, cool room furnished as a library, and left to compose himself for the coming interview.

Five minutes passed before Falconer appeared. He had grown gray and moved with less vigor, but otherwise was the same assured and collected-looking person as before.

Gravely regarding Zach, who rose in a little flutter to meet him, he stood awaiting an explanation of the visit.

As much relieved as astonished to find himself unrecognized, Zach hastened to explain.

"I got a note from you" —

"Ah, yes, you are the gentl—" with a second look, — "the young man from Florida. Pray be seated. I am greatly obliged to you — take this chair where you can get the breeze, Mr." —

The visitor took the seat, but not the hint.

"I beg pardon, but I have n't your name."

"Phips," said Zach, with an awakening suspicion of his host's sincerity.

"Phips," repeated Falconer, in whom the name seemed to stir no associations. "I was simply told a stranger had arrived. It is very good of you to call, Mr. Phips. You are just from the States, I understand?"

"About a week ago."

"And is it true, then, that you have lately been to New Orleans?"

"I left there on the third of the present month."

"So? indeed? Friday week? You will be informed, then, of the exact state of affairs there?"

The visitor nodded.

"You must know, Mr. Phips,— to explain myself a bit,— I have, or I may better say *had*, considerable possessions in New Orleans, and I am most curious to learn — my correspondent there being unhappily abroad — what state they are in since the war."

"Everything is in great disorder there," said Zach, comprehensively.

"Oh, that of course. It could hardly be otherwise. A city made the very seat of war, as you may say. But it is — the town itself is still intact, I suppose?"

"Intact!" Zach repeated the word doubtfully.

"That is to say, the public buildings are not torn down, the houses are not burnt, the " —

"No-o; the walls, the shell, as you may say, is left."

"But much damaged?"

"Yes."

"And changed?"

"Greatly."

"Oh, ay, of course; after a war, what could one expect? My own property, however, is not exactly in the town itself."

Zach regarded the speaker steadily, but made no comment.

"It is, or was, some miles out in the country."

Falconer paused, as if for an assurance that this might prove a saving clause.

Zach did not speak.

"In the direction of the lake," continued the planter, with an inquiring inflection.

“Pontchartrain?”

The planter nodded.

“The thick of the fighting was there.”

“Eh? Do you tell me so?” with a look of consternation.

“And Basswood,” continued the visitor, vainly trying to check the rising color in his cheeks.

“You know it, then?”

With another suspicious glance at the speaker, Zach answered reservedly:—

“I ben there.”

“Have you—have you so? how extraordinary!—you saw it, then. Ah, my good man, tell me, pray, what state is it in? Tell me if”—

The speaker was interrupted by a quick step in the hall, and the next moment a young woman, dressed in a white gown and wearing a wide hat trimmed with pink roses, came tripping into the room. With a passing glance at the stalwart young man near the window, she advanced to the planter, saying easily:—

“Excuse me, papa, —I did n’t know you were engaged. I only came in to say that we shall eat at Clifton. ’Tis a long drive, you know, and we could n’t well get back; so you will be deserted at luncheon ”—

“Very good; quite right, my dear. I shall try to get on. Good-by,” kissing her, — “good-by, and good luck to you!”

“Now, papa dear, you will not feel neglected?”

“Oh, never a bit.”

“It could n’t well be helped; I had nothing to do with the arrangements, or ”—

"There, there! have done! Good-by, and go along with you!"

"You are sure you will not be lonesome?"

"Quite the contrary. Go, I say, and good riddance!" accompanying her to the door and seeing her fairly out. "Now, sir," resumed the impatient man, turning again to his visitor, who sat with eyes glowing like coals and bright spots burning in either cheek, "pray go on! I am all impatience to hear your story!"

"You were asking" — said the young man with a distraught look.

"About my plantation — Basswood. You say you know it?"

"Ye-es."

"Have you seen it since the war?"

"Eh?"

"But you can hardly have done that. I asked," repeated the planter, noting his visitor's wandering attention, "if you had seen it since the war."

"I have."

"Ah — and has it suffered? What state is it in?"

"Ruined!"

"The scoundrels — the ruffians! They shall pay dear for their mischief! Who — who did it, I say?"

"The British army."

"Eh — how — why, ahem! 't is incredible! What is done? How is it damaged?"

"The house is burned."

"Not — er — you don't mean entirely?"

"The offices, the negro-quarters, destroyed."

"Destroyed!"

"The trees cut down."

"What do you say?"

"The plantation ravaged."

"The Vandals!"

"The lawn dug up, the shore stripped of its growth, the landing and boat-house torn to pieces, and the whole place made a scene of desolation your heart would ache to look at."

"What voice is that? Who is talking?"

The questions came from the veranda, whence an excited face was thrust through the open window.

Zach started from his seat, and tremblingly awaited the result of the searching look fixed upon him.

"You — you were talking of Basswood" —

"Poh, poh! my dear, — go take your drive! We are discussing a matter of business; 't is not for you to hear."

The intruder paid no heed; the face vanished from the window and reappeared at the door. With eyes fixed intently on the bearded stranger she stammered: —

"Excuse me, sir, — 't is very odd — hearing your voice, I thought for a moment" —

"My dear," coldly interposed the planter, "you are acting very strangely; this is Mr. Philips, a gentleman from the States, whom you never saw, and" —

"It is — it is — I thought so — I knew it! Oh, Zach, how you are changed! And that dreadful beard! How came you here? Papa, why did n't you tell me?"

"Eh — I — upon my word, are you the lad — with the big sailor? I cannot believe it yet."

As for Zach, he stood all the time clutching the back of his chair, showing pale even through his sunburn, and quite unable to speak.

"Yes, yes," broke in Sylvia, eagerly.

"That went into the navy? "

"Why cannot you see he is?"

"Upon my word I cannot."

"I can — I do. Sit down, Zach! you look more natural every minute. Dear me, how exciting! Do tell us where you have been! — what you have been doing! Did you ever know anything so odd as the way we meet? Why didn't you speak to me at once?"

"I — I thought" —

While Zach was stammering over his answer to this awkward question, a servant entered with a note.

"Excuse me," she said, breaking the seal and hastily reading it. "Was there ever anything so provoking? They are waiting for me. I am indeed very late; there is no help for it; I must really go, but," turning to her old playmate, "you will excuse me! I shall see you very soon again. Papa will explain that this is an imperative engagement. He will entertain you and keep you to dine with us, so I will not say good-by, only good morning."

Making no answer, Zach stood staring at the door with the look of one who has seen a vision and awaits its reappearance.

Falconer, meantime, sensibly relieved by his

daughter's departure, drew up his chair and began again upon the subject of Basswood.

Zach, in round-eyed preoccupation, was unresponsive. It was only upon a third and emphatic repetition of his remark that the planter drew an answer. Thereupon he plied his absent-minded guest with questions bearing upon every detail of his late visit to the plantation, the while pacing the floor, revolving the probabilities of the United States reimbursing a British alien absentee for damages done to his estate by an invading British army.

When at last his visitor showed signs of fatigue, Falconer offered him wine and cigars, loaded him with thanks, and was otherwise appreciative, but omitted to say anything about coming to dinner.

Zach noted the omission; it might or might not be significant. For him, at least, it was sufficiently awkward. To go or not to go was a serious question. Besides, there had been other things in Falconer's atmosphere not quite transparent, and now being recalled served to complicate the problem.

Returning to his lodgings, as the day wore on, Zach suffered himself to become nervous over this small point. For the matter of that, it was not a small point. It was an important and momentous point, and he was amply justified.

As night drew on, he was lifted gently and comfortably out of the dilemma: there came a visiting card with these few lines written upon it:—

"Fearful that papa did not tell you our dinner hour, I write to say that it is six o'clock. Papa sends his compliments."

One trouble gone, another came treading on its heel. This invitation, this dinner, was it — did it mean society?

That word had been for years a mystery and a bugbear, representing a remote and beatific state never well defined in his mind, but potentially connected with the hereafter.

For a time he yielded to panic. He underwent a sensible torture. He recognized the occasion as an ordeal differing only in kind from the severest he had known.

Resolutely bent on undergoing it, he firmly made a few preparations. He had his hair cut and his beard shaved. He bought some gloves and fanciful neck-gear. He repolished his boots three several times. He well-nigh brushed the nap off his coat, and at last, putting on his gloves, marched with divaricated fingers and a rigid air of consciousness towards the Falconer house. Almost arrived, he heard a clock strike in a neighboring steeple; he was an hour too early. Turning, he walked back with precipitation, trembling lest he had been observed from the house. Thereafter, to kill time, he paced up and down Shirley Street, fancying that everybody observed him, as indeed very many did.

At last, the hour came. In a trepidation even worse than that of the day before, he walked slowly up the steps and rang the bell. Then drawing a long breath and summoning every resource of pride and resolution, he followed the servant to the drawing-room with the expression of a culprit going to execution.

Sylvia and her father were bending over a book on the table. Both rose, and she came forward with extended hand.

When quite near her guest she paused; the change in his appearance evidently struck her anew and in some peculiar way. Taking off his beard had, indeed, greatly improved his looks, and withal, despite a certain clumsiness of movement, despite his look of constraint and the mistakes of his ill-assorted toilet, there was an air of something very like distinction in his face.

Influenced by this, or some inscrutable feminine impression, she stopped short in the old familiar greeting which rose to her lips, and stammered, — a deep flush the while overspreading her face, —

“Mr. Phips!”

CHAPTER XVI.

“*MR. PHIPS!*” This perhaps was required by the etiquette of this fine world he was entering. But the blush, that at least was involuntary, and therefore significant. Of what? Here was a problem born of the new and unknown conditions of the new and unknown sphere he had invaded, — a problem not the last or least of the many he was there to encounter.

But there is no time now for problems. Other guests arrive: Miss Campbell and Mr. Ambrister from the Government House, the daughter and nephew of his Excellency the Governor of the Bahamas. Major Pengrip of the West Indian Rifles, with his pretty niece. Mr. Wyly, one of the foremost of the “Conchs,” as the islanders are irreverently called by Gentiles, — and his stout wife.

The appearance of these respectable persons, all in more or less fine attire, assured of manner and intimate with each other, struck Zach with dismay. He stood rigid and silent. Not knowing what to do, he did nothing. His powers of speech failed with his presence of mind. He replied huskily and inconsequently to one or two random remarks addressed to him by the guests, as they were presented. Thus he stood with a dew of agitation on his fore-

head, shifting his weight from one leg to another, and alternately hiding behind him and bringing to the fore his gloved hands, when Falconer, coming up, confidentially whispered that he was to take out Mrs. Mason.

“Take her out!” Extraordinary request! What breach of decorum had the poor duenna been committing! Casting a nervous glance at the unconscious dowager, he wondered whether she would go peaceably, or it would be necessary to resort to force.

While he was hesitating, a servant appeared in the doorway, mumbled something, and vanished, whereupon, directly, the whole company began to pair off. While staring at this new movement, the unhappy youth was mercifully taken in tow by Mrs. Mason, who, all unconscious of her disgrace, passed her hand through his arm and fell into the procession.

Arrived at the dining-room, he noted for the first time that his dress was widely at variance with that of the other men. If his cup of misery failed yet of full measure, here was the brimming drop.

Already dazed by the splendor of the table and the elaboration of the service, he furthermore found the feast bristling with new and distracting points of etiquette. For the food, he bolted everything offered him, and the servant had much ado to keep his glasses filled. For the talk, it was an incomprehensible babble about persons, things, and subject-matters of which he was profoundly ignorant. Amidst the hurly-burly he heard and remembered a

chance remark let fall by Sylvia. She was admiring a jewel worn by Miss Campbell.

"You found it here? To be sure, this is the land of the pink pearl! I am dying with envy of you. I dote on them, but papa never gives me jewels."

Vaguely conscious, meantime, that Mrs. Mason had addressed to him several well-meant conversational overtures which he had answered wide of the mark, by incredible effort he collected his faculties and made a bold effort to set on foot a conversation.

"You have changed greatly since we parted at Basswood, ma'am."

Strange to say, the good woman did not reply to this propitiatory remark, but glared at the speaker through her eyeglass in a way that added greatly to his discomfiture.

At this juncture Sylvia rose and made a movement to leave the room. Everybody seemed to follow suit. With an undissembled sigh of relief, Zach bounced up, and stumbled over two or three silken trains in his anxiety to keep side by side with Mrs. Mason. Only upon arriving at the door he discovered that the other men had remained standing about the table. Covered with confusion, he returned to the fold.

Withal, it is to be feared, his wits here reached the whirring point, for when Falconer presently called upon him for a description of the devastation done at New Orleans, he made such a botched, jumbled, and incoherent repetition of the succinct

account he had before given, that the planter regarded him with amazement. Raising his eyes in time to catch this critical glance of his host, Zach, to whom constraint had by this reached the pitch of torture, started up, and striding out of the room, left the house without a word of apology or leave-taking.

The dinner proved an experience which was destined to have far-reaching results. Escaped from the house, the exasperated guest walked at a furious pace back to his lodgings, where he arrived covered with dust and perspiration, but with a face composed and resolute. He had chosen his part. Betimes next morning he set about playing it.

The first thing was to write a letter to Sylvia. Any letter was a task; this one taxed to the utmost his intellectual resources. All day long he was in the travail of composition, and the next day was passed in correcting and transcribing what he had written. A letter of such moment must not be omitted from this record.

MY DEAR MISS FALCONER, — The first thing for me to do is to make you an apology. Of course, you and your father thought it strange for me to run out of the house in that way. I guess there ain't any kind of an apology that will cover it. I can't explain what made me do it. You would n't understand it, unless you was brought up the way I was. All I can say is, I had to do it and I am sorry for it.

The truth is, I had n't any business to be there; it was n't any place for me. I don't belong to that

kind of life, to that kind of folks, and to that kind of doings, *and I never shall.*

I did think, that as we had grown up together, and had understood each other long ago, we always should. I was a fool, and it is n't the first time, either. It never occurred to me that you was all the time growing up in a different world from what I was. I have found it out now. It would have been better if I had found it out before. You called me *Mr. Phips*; perhaps you had to; perhaps you meant it. It don't make any difference, now. I'm sorry I mortified you that way before your company. I shall never do it again. Good-by.

Your friend,

ZACHARY PHIPS.

Having dispatched this letter, the writer, in further pursuance of his purpose, posted down to the landing to learn what prospect there was of soon getting away from the island. He was told that the *Chance* was very nearly loaded, and was directed to her owner for further particulars.

Proceeding to a small office at the head of the wharf, he found the venerable Scotchman deep in conference with a young man, who sat with his back to the door.

"Is this Mr. Arbuthnot?"

"Ay, at your service."

"When is your boat going to sail?"

"To-morrow, at the crack o' dawn, we're awa."

"Got room for any more passengers?"

"That we hae, an' to spare, sin ther's ony twa bookit."

"Well, I 'm thinkin' of goin' with you."

"Awell, gin I say it my ain sel, ye mought gae further an' fare waur."

At this point, the young man turning about, Zach recognized in him one of the guests at the dinner-party, and was about to retreat with precipitation, when he was hailed by the stranger.

"Ah, Mr. Phips, Mr. Phips; you don't remember me, I see. Mr. Ambrister!"

Zach bowed and turned crimson.

"You came out all right, then. Gad! We were for sending a doctor after you, the other night. I was asking about you this afternoon. The Falconers were up at Government House. Miss Sylvia is a bit anxious, I think. 'T was nothing serious, I hope. You find yourself quite well again, then?"

"I — er — quite. I 'm obliged to you."

"And so you are going to the States with Falconer?"

"With Falconer?"

"Eh? Did n't you know? He goes to-morrow. 'T is he and his man are the two other passengers."

"Oh-h — er — I had n't heard — I 'm not quite sure of going myself."

"Ah, then, since you 're not of his party, you 'd far better wait for the next trip, and go with Arbuthnot and me."

Whether conciliated by this cordial young man, or influenced by some other consideration, Zach caught at the straw.

"How long before the next trip?"

"A week, more or less," with a look at Arbuthnot.

The Scotchman nodded.

"What do you say, Mr. Phips?"

"I will think over it. I will let you know in the morning," answered Zach evasively, making his escape.

Next morning, early, Zach went down to make known his decision. He was told that Arbuthnot was on the dock. Going thither, he found a crowd collected to see the schooner sail. He hailed the Scotchman and told him he had decided to wait until the next trip. That busy person scarcely heeded him. Turning to come away, he cast a glance towards the crowded deck of the vessel. He saw there the planter engaged in close conversation with a stout, red-faced man, who was further distinguished with regard to his personal appearance by a bluish wen on his nose, by a loud voice, and an over-ingratiating manner.

A minute's observation of Falconer's air of authority, and the other's fawning manner, disclosed the relations between the two. In the midst of his final directions the planter was interrupted by the signal to sail, and as the stout man stepped ashore Zach heard his employer address him as Woodbine.

Vague associations connected with that name, — associations too vague to be recalled, — haunted Zach all the way back to his lodgings.

There a new direction was given to his thoughts by finding an answer to his letter. It was short and simple, but very disturbing.

MY DEAR MR. PHIPS, — I fear from your note that you are making far too much of a very small matter. We of course understood that you were ill, or otherwise indisposed, and attached no importance to your abrupt departure from our house. There are so many exigencies in life before which etiquette must give way, that the matter is scarcely worth alluding to.

I am, however, truly grieved that you were so unhappy at our little party, and to see that you are inclined to draw hasty and rash conclusions from your discomfort. I trust you will not let so slight a cause influence seriously laid plans of life or impair your esteem for certain old and faithful friends, among whom I hope you count

Your obedient servant,

SYLVIA FALCONER.

The quietness of tone and the excellent common-sense of this note were impressive. Zach remembered with mortification the heroics of his own, in comparison. He was a good deal surprised to find his old playmate displaying such maturity of intelligence. There was something else in the note not expressed in words, but as it seemed, lurking between the lines, — something which delighted while it disturbed him. He was not clear how much significance he was justified in attaching to it.

Much or little, it afforded abundant food for reflection, and so, wherever he went in the few days of idleness which intervened before his departure, he was busy with the problem.

One excursion was to the famous sea-gardens, the special show-place of the islands. Sailing a couple of miles up the harbor, they anchored in a little channel between two islands, and taking to row-boats, paddled about, looking through sea-glasses at the wonders outspread beneath them: corals, sea-fans, sponges, curious fishes, brilliant with every color of the rainbow, and all sharply defined and set off by the clear white sand of the bottom.

Absorbed in the study of these marvels, Zach had not noted the arrival of another party until he was aroused by a well-known voice, close at hand, crying out in tones of enthusiastic delight.

Looking up, he recognized a party from Government House, dispersed in several row-boats about him. In one, Miss Campbell and the private secretary; in another, nearer at hand, Sylvia and Ambrister.

The polite young Englishman was leaning over the rail helping his companion adjust the clumsy glass. Thus engaged, with heads together, absorbed in the unusual spectacle, they made a striking picture, — a picture, however, which proved not altogether pleasing to one beholder, who savagely bade his boatman row as fast as possible from the spot.

Crouched in the bow of his sail-boat, the same personage sulked all the way home, chewing his cud of bitter-sweet, all unconscious of some very splendid sunset effects in sky and water.

Passing Fort Montague, cold and gray, on the left, and skirting the wreck-strewn shore of Hog

Island on the right, they tacked in and out among the little keys, on one of which the ruins of the pirate fort, once the stronghold of the notorious Black Beard, was outlined with the incisive sharpness of an etching against the golden light-flood beyond.

Arrived at the landing, Zach roamed along the docks until he came to a retired spot, where, sitting down upon the sea-wall, he lighted his pipe and gave way to his thoughts.

Aroused presently by a mumbling at his side, he looked around and saw an old negro boatman, who was unfolding something from a dirty rag which he had pulled from his pocket.

"Go away!" said Zach.

"Mass'r, look a-dar!"

"Get along with you, I say!"

"Dat ar 's a shiner, dat is! Mass'r nebber see a pink pearl like dat, he did n't!"

"What do you say?"

"Look fo' yo'sef! Fo' Gawd, yo nebber see nuffin like dat!"

Extending his hand as he spoke, he displayed a large jewel of a delicate rose color.

"Pink pearl! How do you know it is?"

"Know it, sho'; coteh conchs all my life, but nebber see no sech one afore."

"Humph!" looking at the gem indifferently, "take it away!"

"Better buy it, Mass'r; git it mos' fo' nuffin."

A thought shot through Zach's brain. Directly, he straightened up and began to chaffer. The price

demanded, although paltry compared with the value of the gem, was yet beyond his means.

The negro, noting the purchaser's sudden interest, held stiffly to his price.

Presently, getting impatient, Zach drew from his pocket his whole store of money, and extending it to the man, bawled out:—

“That's all the money I got, you black devil. Now take it, or leave it!”

The negro hesitated; the improbability of finding another purchaser weighed heavily in the balance. The bargain was struck. Handing over the pearl, the seller picked up the money and disappeared.

Next day, Zach got up with a preoccupied look. It was not without a serious intent, moreover, that he spent several hours in the uncongenial task of making a toilet. As soon as he was ready to sally forth, however, his energy and purpose appeared to fail. He dragged along the sultry streets, as it seemed without end or aim. In this irresolute mood, coming to the corner of Bay and Parliament streets, he checked his pace and purposely loitered. Passing between the Government buildings, he paused to study the contorted roots of the great silk-cotton tree, which have a grotesque resemblance to two elephants in deadly struggle. Lingered a moment at the well, where sat a couple of ragged young negroes, chewing sugar-cane, he presently sauntered along the avenue of young Spanish laurels leading to the little octagonal jail, since transformed into a library. There he paused for several minutes, peer-

ing curiously through the grated door at the sleepy black sentinel on guard. Here, aroused by the sudden clatter of horses' hoofs, he looked around, and saw a horseman coming down Parliament Street. With intent looks he watched him turn the corner of Shirley Street, and go cantering away towards the barracks. It was Ambrister.

Straightway, the irresolution faded from the beholder's face. He walked briskly up the hill, passed through the well-known gate, mounted the steps, and rang the bell.

Sylvia was at home. One might almost have thought she expected her visitor, for upon his appearance an evanescent little flush burned in her cheeks, and for a whole minute she stammered over her greeting. She struggled, moreover, with a very evident constraint in putting the interview on an easy footing. If the truth must be told, she did not succeed after all. It more and more plainly appeared that the interview was not to be put on an easy footing, chiefly on account of the demeanor of her guest, who, it must be confessed, behaved in a very disconcerting manner. Staring straight into her eyes with a sombre intensity, he neither spoke nor made any offer to speak. Worse again, he did not answer to leads in the conversation.

He sat and gazed, as though intent upon reading her unexpressed thought, too absorbed in the business the while to suffer a moment's distraction.

Unable to sustain this ordeal, she resorted to various feminine devices to create a diversion. She rose and fluttered about the room, made inconse-

quent remarks upon the weather and the view, brought books and pictures to be examined. Upon divers of these points, thus violently introduced, she affected to take the advice of Mrs. Mason, sitting in an adjoining room.

The visitor awaited his turn, — waited gravely and patiently, until, tired of hovering about, she settled down again in her chair.

Still he did not speak, whereupon she, as if feeling the paralysis of constraint weighing down also upon her, burst forth with a noisy affectation of her old waywardness. Unwarned by the hysterical note in this forced effort, and unsuspecting its purpose, the visitor received it with a stare of surprise. Whereupon, to his amazement, she burst into a fit of weeping.

Rising instantly with a look of concern, he hurried to her. She, quickly rallying to the defense of her compromised dignity, repulsed him with a gesture of resentment, and hurried from the room.

Greatly astonished by this move, Zach stood gazing after the retreating girl. Passing in severe review his own words and acts, — so few, so restrained, so non-committal, — it was clear that he at least was in no wise accountable for it. Doubtless it was only one of those periodic and inexplicable outbursts peculiar to the sex, with which he was not familiar.

Hardly had he arrived at this conclusion, when Sylvia returned, furtively wiping her eyes, and in a measure composed.

“Excuse me,” she said; “perhaps you did n’t mean anything by it after all.”

“By it? I!”

“I dare say, too, that I am a little unsettled by papa’s going. ’T is the first time, you must know, that he ever left me, — the very first; and it was a great mistake for me to stay behind. I see it now. I feel it every minute. A very great and sad mistake! Yet, after all, perhaps ’t is better, — it must be a great deal better for me to outgrow my babyhood. ’T is absurd to act and feel like a baby when you are really a woman, — a woman grown. Dear me! How frightful to think of it. It means such crushing responsibilities. Oh-h-h, I wish I had always remained a child! I wish I could go back again, not too far, but just a very little way to the dear old days, — to the careless, happy days, — to the glad, joyous days, when — For mercy and pity’s sake, sit down in your chair, and don’t stand staring there at me another minute, or I will go straight and bring in Mason!”

Astonished by this outburst of volubility, and recalled to himself by the sharp personal criticism with which it concluded, Zach meekly resumed his seat without a word. Meanwhile Sylvia had time to recover her breath, and in some degree her self-control.

“And you,” she resumed in a much quieter tone, “I hope you are quite well, again?”

Reminded by this question of his last social experience in the house, he answered bluntly, —

“I have n’t been sick.”

“But they said, — I was told” —

“Other folks can think what they like, but you need n’t believe any such story.”

"I beg your pardon, — let us not talk of it! 'T is of no consequence."

"It *is* of consequence. I told you what was the matter with me. I was like a fish out of water. I was not in my own element. I could not breathe in that air, and so I ran away."

"I should have done just the same myself."

"No, you would n't."

"Excuse me!"

"You have learned how to act in company, and you would have acted right, and there is just where the difference is between us, and where it always will be!"

"So I dare say it will, if you have made up your mind to it and persist in repeating it as a rule of conduct."

Zach listened open-eyed to this criticism; its pith and keenness so recalled the cool maturity of the letter. Following hard upon the late burst of childishness, it proved bewildering. Revolving all this, he yet obstinately repeated, —

"It 's there, I tell you; it 's none of my puttin' or fixin', and there 's no use my tryin' to do away with it."

However dogmatically this was said, he waited in evident concern for her answer. She hesitated, conscious that he was studying her averted face, and as if to give point to her words.

"That 's a question for you to decide."

"It is, and I have decided it," he answered promptly. Then, disappointed at receiving no rejoinder, he went on in a deprecating way. "That

bein' the case, you wonder what I 'm doin' here. Well, I don't know myself. I said I should n't come again, but " —

She averted still further her averted eyes.

"But you made me out such a fool in your letter" —

Straightening up suddenly, with a touch of her old childish imperativeness, she cried, —

"Stop!"

The visitor's face brightened. Here was a return of the old enchantment. Willingly enough he yielded to the spell.

"You may say as many silly things about yourself as you choose, but I shall not allow you to pervert what I say."

"Did you not" —

She put up a small, silencing hand.

"I am talking now. You have had your turn."

His evident delight in being thus bullied would have made capital by-play on the stage.

"What I said in that letter," she went on with her pinchbeck dogmatism, "or rather what I meant to say, was that you have conjured up out of your own disordered imagination a very dreadful bugbear, which you will go on scaring yourself with to the end of time, until somebody steps forward to show 't is nothing but a 'thing of shreds and patches.' "

He cast an uneasy glance at her, as if half suspecting what she said might be true.

"But you will never see this, you will never acknowledge the truth of what I say, until your eyes are opened."

"What will ever open them?" he asked, half sullenly.

"Your own success."

The terseness of this answer struck him like the breath from an oracle. Half in awe, half in admiration, he recognized the acumen so suddenly developed in the alert little creature who used years ago to look up to him as a mentor. Now, whether really in doubt or whether with the purpose of keeping her talking, he said, —

"I don't know what you mean."

"I mean, learn to do something in life — no matter what — better than anybody else, and your fortune is made. Down will go all barriers and open will fly all doors at your approach."

A little stirring of the blood, it might have been from shame, showed in the listener's face, and he gazed spell-bound at this young sibyl. She, finding the pause which ensued awkward, suddenly changed the subject by asking, —

"Do you purpose staying long in Nassau?"

"I am going right away," rising with sudden energy, as if recalled to himself by her question.

"Directly?"

"Yes, to-morrow morning. I am come now to say good-by."

"Why — I — you — is it not very sudden?" she stammered, not without a little flush.

"I have brought you a keepsake," he continued, noting her manner, while clumsily drawing a small box from his pocket.

"Oh!" taking it with a pleased look. "Thank you very much!"

She lifted the lid, and directly a look of constraint appeared in her face. Reflecting for a moment, she handed back the box, saying, —

“No, no; I cannot take it!”

The giver looked at her as if not understanding.

“This is a thing of great value. I have never received such a gift from — er — I thought it might be a flower, or shell, or something which I might — But I — er — I cannot take this.”

With eyes bent in stern suspicious scrutiny upon the agitated face before him, Zach stood for a moment holding the box in his extended palm as if to afford her a chance to repent. Then emptying the jewel into his hollowed hand, he threw it out of the window, and stalked without a word from the room.

Down to the water side and on past the barracks, the water battery, and the Tea-House, counting not his steps, and mindless of his course, he followed the westward road until he had left the town far behind.

One hour, two, three, followed in unnoted succession, and still he kept on the hard white road which, shut in on either hand by the dark masses of the wild-grape tree, showed like a broad gray ribbon strung carelessly through the seaside copses.

Meantime night had fallen, — a lowering night, — while a northwest wind drove the breakers on the rocks with a continuous roar. His first vigor abated, the agitated young man proceeded at a more moderate pace. Arrived at a point far from any human habitation, his attention was presently attracted by

a light on the shore, a long distance ahead of him. It appeared and disappeared at intervals, as he approached, until when he arrived within convenient distance for investigation, it suddenly crossed the road and sank from sight amongst the shrubbery on the left.

Approaching the spot, he looked with passing curiosity at the place. The mystery of it proved a distraction. Everything was dark and still. He tried to persuade himself that it was a hallucination, when, close at hand, there was heard a confused and indistinct sound,—a sound like the murmur of human voices. Presently it came nearer. Directly, a faint light appeared among the bushes, flickered, grew stronger, then vanished. At the same moment two or three dark figures emerged from the dense blackness of the thicket, and crossing the road only a few paces from where he stood, disappeared in the direction of the beach.

Thoroughly aroused and interested, Zach softly approached the spot in the bushes whence they had emerged. He found, to his surprise, a hole in the ground large enough to admit a man's body, from which a faint light issued. Crouching, he crept in, and found himself at the entrance to a large cave. He stopped in time. The cave was already occupied.

A fire at the lower end disclosed its extent and its occupants. Ranged about the glowing coals were a half dozen men, squatting or lying on the ground, all save one, who seemed to be haranguing his fellows.

Sure that he had heard the voice before, Zach strove through the gloom to make out the speaker's features, but without success. Failing to see, he listened the more intently.

"Poh, poh! 'T is but a few weeks' delay. The goods are not perishable. The market is sure. A carpenter's adze will blot out all marks and shipping labels. Store 'em for a month, and then run 'em into Santiago. Sure profit. No risk. A pretty penny to divide, eh?"

As he finished, the speaker leaned forward to kindle his pipe. The light fell full upon his face. The eavesdropper suppressed an exclamation; he recognized without difficulty the man with the wen whom he had seen talking to Falconer.

"How many more loads?"

"Not more than five."

"Twice that?"

"Ask Joe. He 'll be back in a minute."

Taking the warning, Zach softly retreated; and in good time. Scarcely had he gained the road when four stout men appeared, bearing upon a litter a heavy load of merchandise, which they deposited in the cave.

It was late when Zach arrived home, — far too late to take any action on his discovery; but next morning he lost no time in laying the matter before Arbuthnot, as the wisest head among his narrow circle of acquaintance.

The worthy Scotchman heard the story with a face quite impassive.

"They're pirates, that gang, and their leader is one of your own citizens," said Zach hotly. "They have made a cave there big enough to hold a whole ship's goods."

"Na," answered Arbuthnot, with a sly twinkle in his eye. "They did na mak the caves; ilka body kens thae caves, an thae gentlemen are no exactly pirates, neyther, but a soort o' gentlemen free-traders, ye ken. A wrecker is na a pirate, lad; he's a lang way removed, gin he be na oot-an-oot an honest mon!"

"He's a pirate, I say," repeated Zach stoutly.

"'Tis na weel to spier intil ither folkse's business in thae pairts, tak my ward for that; sae keep yer finger oot o' the pie!"

"That will I not, and if I were not going so soon, I would put it in with some effect. Tell me, now, who is the official to go to with this story?"

"Ane wad think ther'd be nane betther than Mr. Attorney General yon, wha has little to do but pit up his lazy feet on the table and read books frae mornin' till night."

"The attorney general?"

"Ay, the Honorable Mr. Kerr, gin ye maun hae yer way" —

But Zach was already off on his errand. Entering the office designated, he asked for the attorney general.

A clerk on a stool silently pointed to a door leading to an adjoining room.

Zach went in, and found a tall man dressed in black stooping over a table. The man lifted his

head, and showed a pale face knitted up into an habitual scowl.

The effect was notable. Although he neither started nor spoke, Zach showed in his face a profound astonishment.

“You?”

“Eh?”

“Mr. Blennerhassett!”

“Sh-h!” hissed the startled official, jumping from his seat and hastily shutting the door. “Do not speak that name here!”

“Eh!”

“My name is Kerr — Kerr, sir!”

“But when I knew you — when you were with Burr, you used to be called” —

“Nothing of the sort, sir! I never saw you — I never heard of you before,” interrupted Mr. Kerr angrily. “You are mistaken — mistaken, I say,” he repeated, still more excitedly. “And who are you, and what may be your business with me?”

Rather bewildered by the encounter, Zach related what he had to tell, the attorney general listening with extreme impatience.

“Poh! a few wreckers hiding goods in a cave! ’T is an every-day matter. The goods are lost to their owner, and are treasure trove to the first comer. These gentlemen have their rights as finders. If that be your whole business with me” —

“It is all,” murmured the complainant, his moral sense now becoming as muddled as his intellectual.

“You ’ll excuse me, then, for wishing you good-

day," said the testy official, rising and bowing in a manner too significant to be mistaken.

Next morning the *Chance* duly sailed. Zach, having spent all his money on the unlucky pink pearl, was obliged to sell his watch to pay for his passage.

CHAPTER XVII.

ARTICLE IX. of the Treaty of Ghent provides, among other things, that the United States of America shall forthwith restore to the Indians "all the possessions, rights, and privileges which they may have enjoyed or been entitled to in one thousand eight hundred and eleven."

It boots not here to tell again the story of how the said United States of America got possession of the rich hunting-grounds of the Creeks and Seminoles, and how, once obtained, they held on to their prize. It is a threadbare old story, which does not improve with age. Enough for the present purpose to say that with the publication of the treaty, a long-smouldering hope flamed up anew in the red man's bosom. The Great Father at Washington had then answered his prayer, his lands were to be given back, his wrongs righted. *Fiat justitia, ruat cælum.*

The ingenuous red man was premature with his jubilations. He grew wiser on a closer acquaintance with civilization. Months passed, years passed, the sky held its place while justice lay skulking. What then? Treaties have been disregarded before. If the United States of America choose to ignore Article IX., who is to hinder? Not the British. They have enough to do to look after Buonaparte, without enforcing treaties for their far-off, helpless,

and savage allies. Not the Spaniards, who have scant vigor to keep up their child's play at government in the Florida peninsula. Not any moral scruples of its — the United States of America's — own, for a government is a corporation, and a corporation has no conscience. So the red man's claims go unheeded while this deed which he, in his ignorance, calls a robbery, becomes sanctioned by prescription, and the robber goes on his prospering way unscathed.

Meantime, the red men are not content. They are unwise enough to show their resentment, and in a rude, futile way, to seek redress. The United States of America, thereupon, very promptly and forcibly retaliate, with what result will presently appear.

Into the very midst of this international muddle, by no intent or fault of his own, Zach now came blundering, like Goodman Blind. That is to say, embarked with Arbuthnot, Ambrister, young Jock Arbuthnot, and clerk Peter Cook, on board the *Chance*, which was otherwise laden with a well-selected cargo of powder, lead, knives, blankets, vermilion, beads, calico, clothing, and other things dear to the savage heart, he duly came to anchor in the harbor of Pensacola, after a prosperous voyage of two and a half days.

Having no plans of his own, he readily caught at a suggestion from Arbuthnot to cast in his lot with the others at the trading-station.

Although not in line with certain lofty ambitions he had long nourished, this venture promised to re-

sult in something better than a makeshift. Indeed, upon his very first marshaling of the possibilities, a startling notion flashed upon him: might it not bring into his life a new element of success? — a meaner, more ignoble, but essential element? Arbuthnot was said to have made a fortune out of it.

A fortune! For the first time in his life he seriously considered the subject concretely. By a strictly original chain of reasoning he was now led to recognize money as a source of power. Upon riper meditation he was amazed to find how often and how largely this new element entered into combination with other forms of success, and with what amazing splendor of effect.

Money! The Falconers had it. Their friends had it. Nearly all the notable persons he had known in life had seemed to have plenty of it. Even in the case of Burr, was it not the lack of it which surrounded that hapless man with an atmosphere so sordid and pathetic? Was not the lack of it the sole cause for the present misery, distress, and separation of the Blennerhassetts? Might it not be the lack of it which kept one Zachary Phips from realizing certain dear desires? His early days in Florida were filled with these reflections, which are here formulated from a study of effects.

Arrived in port, Arbuthnot made his arrangements with a skill acquired by long experience. Peter Cook was to be sent northward to announce to the Georgia Indians the return of their old friend with a fresh cargo. Jock, with a negro slave for attendant, was to be dispatched up the Suwanee

in a canoe to the trading-station, to open and make ready the storehouse for the coming goods, notifying Chief Bolecks and his tribe of their arrival. The trader himself was to linger at Pensacola for some days to dispose of certain of his wares to the town-folk and report upon divers commissions he had executed for his old friend the Spanish commandant. Zach was to be left in command of the vessel, Ambriester having expressed an intention of going ashore with the trader.

Directly, all was bustle on board the little schooner. Hastening his preparations, Jock got off the day of their arrival. Peter Cook was not ready until the following morning. Zach chanced to be on deck within earshot, and heard the old trader's final directions to his departing clerk. He had grievous cause many times afterwards to recall that moment, both to applaud the old man's shrewdness and caution, and to puzzle over the sly, shifty expression of the clerk's face.

"Things hae sairly changed hereaboot sin we hae been awa, lad. Ther's an unco stir i' the air, but it's nae affair o' ours, mind ye! Sae haud yer tongue, but keep baith eyes and ears open."

"Never fear, sir! They're not likely to catch me napping."

"As ye'll nae be ganging sae far awa frae Ham-bly and Doyle, it wadna be amiss to drap in, in a neighborly way, and see for yersel how the wind is blawing. Ther's talk thae twa hae turned their backs on Colonel Nichols an' his teachings, sin he sailed awa hame."

“Aha, I know ’em.”

“An’ hae gane ower, body an’ saul, to Forbes & Co., our rivals. They say — I gie it only by way o’ hearsay, God forbid I sud speak ill o’ ony ane! — they say thae twa be haun an’ glove wi’ the Yankees, an’ hae thus come by gude recht to be held in suspicion by the redskins.”

“I see.”

“Aweel, this may na be a’taegether sae bad a thing for us, mair by token I hae ever keepit my word, gin it war my aith, wi’ the redskins, an’ they bear it in mind, lad. Ay, ay, mind ye that! Fair dealin’ is aye the true way, whether it be wi’ saunt or sinner.”

“Not a doubt o’ that, sir.”

“An’, Peter, ane word mair i’ yer lug: gin ye meet ony o’ our auld frien’s, the chiefs, haud a taut grip o’ yer tongue. They’re at loggerheads wi’ the Yankees lang syne, an’ a’ has gane wrang wi’ them, puir deevils, sin Colonel Nichols went awa. Ther braw fort is ta’en awa by the thievish neygurs, an’ blawn up by the Yankees, an’ nane o’ the gran’ things promised by Nichols hae come to pass. The Yankees play them fause, an’ naebody’ll heed ther complaints: sae tak ye nae sides i’ the maitter, or waur may come o’t!”

A variety of small matters kept Arbuthnot at Pensacola a week, which he spent mostly on shore enjoying the hospitality of his friend the commandant.

All being at last ready, they set off for the trading-station. Their course up the beautiful Suwanee,

bordered for much of the way by the primeval forest, was an unusual and pleasant experience for Zach.

Arrived, they found Jock and his attendant eagerly awaiting them. All was in readiness, and the next two weeks were passed in landing and storing the goods.

Meantime the Indians heard of their arrival, and came every day in increasing numbers to trade. With the others came also the chiefs, — all old friends of Arbuthnot, — Opy Hatchy, Apiny, Mapalitchy, and last but not least, the great Bolecks himself.

Zach noted with a passing surprise that these chieftains paid little heed to the tempting store of goods laid out for their inspection, but with gloomy looks and knitted brows were forever beckoning the trader forth to whispered conferences in the forest.

Whatever the purport of all these talks, they furnished the trader with much food for reflection, for he went about constantly with a look of preoccupation, and, quite unlike himself, would sit the whole evening in the doorway, smoking his pipe, and never open his mouth to speak.

The problem he was busied with was clearly not one to be thought out in a minute, and weeks thus passed — weeks of busy days and long, thoughtful evenings — before he came to any conclusion.

At last, as it seemed, he made up his mind: one day, after an unusually long conference with the chiefs, Arbuthnot called Zach from the storehouse

into his own little room to act as his amanuensis, he himself being disabled by rheumatism.

"I hae noted ye write fair an' large, lad, an' what I here say I want writ as plain as ye ken hoo. I charge ye til set doun ma preceese words, or mischief may come o't."

Promising to do his best, Zach seated himself at the little pine table and took up a pen.

"'T is an uncanny business, this we hae to deal wi', an' the less note ye tak o' what gaes intil yer lug an oot o' yer pen, the better, mayhap, it may be for ye."

With this introduction, than which nothing could have served better to fix the attention of his amanuensis, the Scotchman dictated a letter to the American commandant at Fort Gaines, of which the following extract contains the gist, both as to style and substance:—

"The head chiefs request that I will inquire of you why American settlers are descending the Chat-tahoochee, driving the poor Indian from his habitation, and taking possession of his home and cultivated fields? Without authority, I can claim nothing of you; but a humane and philanthropic principle guiding me, I hope the same will influence you, and if such is really the case, and the line marked out by the treaty of peace between Great Britain and the United States respecting the Indian nation has been infringed upon by the subjects of the latter, that you will represent to them their improper conduct and prevent its continuance."

Letters of like tenor were written to the British

minister at Washington, to the Governor General at Havana, to the Spanish governors in Florida, to the commandants of American forts on the frontiers, to Governor Mitchell of Georgia, to Colonel Nichols in London, and others.

While it was evident from all this that the trader had the cause of his red friends deeply at heart, Zach remarked that in communication with them he preserved a restraint of manner and conservatism of tone not far removed from coolness.

Quite otherwise was it with Ambrister; charmed with the reception accorded him by the chieftains, and delighted by the freedom of their wildwood life, he warmly espoused their cause and emphatically expressed his indignation and sympathy. By a certain free and confident way of talking, moreover, he soon inspired his new friends with unbounded confidence in his ability to help them.

In justice let it be added, he did what he could to make good his word. He appealed to his uncle, Governor Cameron, at Nassau, he wrote to Colonel Nichols, he consulted many others of authority and influence, and meantime kept up the hopes of his petitioners by assurances that some of these efforts must succeed.

During all these weeks of waiting he passed much of the time as an honored guest in the wigwams of Bolecks and his followers.

Affairs at the station went on quietly and regularly. After the return of Peter Cook, Arbuthnot was relieved of much of the detail. It was a matter of surprise to Zach that the bartering also was left

to this insignificant-looking young person. It may as well be added in passing that he soon had occasion to modify his opinion of the little clerk's abilities.

Quite unexpectedly he overheard one or two bargains made by Peter. Having met with unusual success hunting, one day, he came home earlier than usual and threw himself down on the grass outside the warehouse door. Peter, all unsuspecting of eavesdroppers, was bartering with some Indians within. Listening idly at first, Zach presently sat bolt upright and cocked his ear. The phlegm with which the trader underrated the red man's skins, and the effrontery with which he put an exorbitant price upon the trinkets offered in exchange, made the listener stare. His astonishment reached its height when, in answer to the protests of the Indians, he heard Peter in his cool drawl assure them that these hard terms were exacted in strict accordance with the instructions of Mr. Arbuthnot.

Such was the demand, however, that notwithstanding these hard terms and high prices, the stock of goods gradually diminished, and it became evident that Arbuthnot must soon go back to Nassau for a fresh supply. Meanwhile the Indians, tired of waiting for the long-delayed answers to the letters he had written in their behalf, summoned him to attend a council. He hesitated at first, and only at the eleventh hour, with very evident reluctance, decided to go. For some unassigned reason, he took Zach with him.

Led by an Indian guide through several miles of

trackless forest, they came to a clearing where, about an open camp-fire, they found a dozen chiefs and braves assembled in solemn conclave. The white men were gravely welcomed and assigned places in the circle, where, not much to their surprise, they found Ambrister already installed.

For a time nothing was said. Presently an old chief arose and comprehensively stated the case of the Indian against the United States of America, winding up with an arraignment, very pointed and forcible, of the civilized and so-called Christian white man in his treatment of his so-called red brother.

The speech was hardly concluded when Ambrister got upon his legs. Directly, Arbuthnot's face clouded, and he uttered one or two dry coughs. Unheeding the warning, Ambrister went on with a very vigorous discourse. He said in brief that it was of no use to mince matters any longer, that the Indians were right, that the Yankees had seized upon their land and were crowding them out. That these latter kept no word or oath, that they came on like the ocean-tide, farther and farther every year. As for the red men, they had now been warned off even the small territory left them, — lands which had all once belonged to their fathers. The Great Chief at Washington and the Great Chief over the sea had made a treaty agreeing to give back to the red men the lands taken from them. The Yankees had broken their agreement. They had not given back the lands, and they never would until they were compelled. It was time to dig up the tomahawk,

and drive out these white serpents which had crept into the red man's wigwam.

A chorus of grunts at the conclusion of this harangue showed how every word had struck home. Then fell a pause. Arbuthnot knew it was his turn. He knew also how to make his words effective. He was no novice at a powwow. Deliberately finishing his pipe, amid the most profound silence he rose, knocked out the ashes, and, glancing slowly about the circle, delivered himself in cool, dry tones:—

“Ma frien's, I hae hearkened to yer speeches, an' I canna say I like them weel. What is set doon in truth an' reason, I hae naething to deespute, but for the rest an' the muckle pairt o't, 't is bairn's play an' loud talk. Vinegar catcheth nae flees, an' loud talk 'll do ye nae gude. It is na to be questioned the Yankees hae dune ye harm, but bide yer time! Wrang is na righted in a day. Ye hae heard o' the treaty: aweel, ken ye noo what is a treaty? 'T is a solemn an' awesome compact, ilka line an' word o' whilk is a sacred thing, whilk maun be kept as the Gret Spirit keepeth his covenants. 'T is laid down in thet treaty ye s'all hae bock yer launds; an' sae ye s'all. Tak my word for it. But 't is a weary way frae this to Washington. The Gret Chief yon kens little o' the doin's o' thae sons o' Belial, an' when it comes to his attention, as I hae ta'en pains 'it s'all, ye may be sure he'll hae justice dune ye. See, then, that naebody the whiles raises han' to do ony harm to thae Yankees, that naebody stirs up strife, that naebody does onythin'

to brak the peace! Thae soort yon hae mair cunnin' an' force than yoursel's. Hae ye na marked that they come forth frae ilka war with mair lands and goods, whiles the red mon is driven far an' farther awa frae the home o' his forbears? Tak ye, then, the warnin' o' an auld mon! Bide yer time! Do naethin' — naethin' — naethin'!" he solemnly repeated, with both hands uplifted, "to brak the peace! An' noo come awa wi' ye, Zach. We maun een be makin' our way hame!"

Without another word he stalked forth from the circle, with Zach at his heels. Not unnaturally the orator concluded that the Indians were impressed with his speech, from the fact that for several weeks all was quiet in the direction of Bolecks's village, and the chiefs did not once show themselves at the station. As the weeks, however, rounded into a full month, this silence became ominous. Long experienced in Indian tactics, the trader feared that it boded something unwelcome.

The mystery was not destined to remain long unsolved. One afternoon, as Zach stood lounging in the doorway, a party of Indians suddenly emerged from the forest and advanced towards the house. At their head, an astonishing anomaly, marched a tall savage, dressed in the splendor of an English military uniform, of which the tight-fitting scarlet coat set off to great advantage his fine figure, while the plumed hat added loftiness to his port. Scarcely less remarkable than he, there walked by his side a young girl of sixteen or thereabouts, of quite phenomenal beauty.

Arbuthnot was busy at a little distance from the house, tinkering up a packing-box to hold his skins. The party recognized and went towards him.

Curious to know something of visitors so unusual in appearance, Zach called Peter Cook to explain.

The clerk's face darkened at sight of them, and he responded with a disturbed look to Zach's questions, —

“Humph! what does *he* want?”

“Who is it?”

“The great Prophet Francis.”

“A chief?”

“Yes — no — just the same thing. He has great power over the copperskins. He's the one Colonel Nichols took over to England. The Londoners made a show of him, — took him to court, dressed him up like a turkey-cock, and turned his head. But,” concluded Peter, muttering to himself and withdrawing out of observation behind Zach, “what's he speechifying to the old man about?”

“Who is the girl?” pursued Zach, unheeding his companion's anxiety.

“His daughter, to be sure, — a sparkler, ain't she? As civilized, too, as you please, and speaks English like a Johnny Bull. She can write, and read, and chatter Spanish, and they have taught her to dance, down there at the fort. You should see Malee dressed up in the London toggery her dad brought out to her.”

“The Prophet Francis,” muttered Zach, scanning the group with growing interest.

“The Yankees gave him that name. He is called

Hillishajo among his own sort," explained Peter, who, noticing that the group was gradually nearing the house, suddenly withdrew.

As the interview between her father and Arbuthnot bade fair to be a protracted one, the girl was soon observed to grow restive, and, separating from the group, began to saunter about the clearing and back and forth before the door.

Divining her curiosity, Zach graciously invited her in, and shrewdly reasoning that the savage young woman might share certain weaknesses common to her civilized sister, spread before her wondering eyes his tempting array of small wares. As she, however, had nothing to offer in exchange, it was, on his part, purely a labor of love. His pains were rewarded by her evident delight, which was so great that when, at last, summoned to go by her father, she had great ado to tear herself away.

Thereupon Zach, noting the struggle, by some happy or unhappy impulse, presented her with a small hand-mirror.

More eloquent far than spoken words of gratitude were the beaming looks of the enraptured Malee. She gazed with open and unstinted admiration at her own reflected image, and was, indeed, so lost in its contemplation that her impatient father came in person to summon her forth.

With an amused look Zach stood in the doorway gazing after the party, as they moved away, noting the vigorous stride of the father and the free, graceful movement of the girl. As they reached the edge of the woods, Malee suddenly turned about, but

finding herself observed, shyly dropped her head, and Zach imagined he could detect a flush suffusing her dusky cheek as, speeding after her father, she disappeared beneath the overhanging boughs.

Hardly had the party disappeared when the trader, leaving his work, came slowly towards the house. As he made room for him to pass in, Zach noticed that the old man's face was white and stern. Calling Peter from his work in the outer warehouse, the Scotchman ushered him into the little office and carefully shut the door. The precaution was idle, for through the open window every word of the following colloquy was distinctly heard by Zach, as he stood in the doorway.

"Sae, ye fause villain! hoo daur ye staund up an' look me i' the ee?"

"What have I done?"

"What hae ye dune? What hae ye dune, ye domned leein', deceitful, fause-hearted traitor! I hae muckle ado to haud off my han's frae yer throat. What hae ye dune? Recht weel ye ken, an' recht weel ken I. Ye hae cozened the puir redskins oot o' their fair returns, ye hae extorted unheerd o' prices. Ye hae robbed an' cheated, an' leed, an' dune a' i' my name, till I hae nae credit left wi' white man or red, an' it maun be oot o' the mercy o' Providence gin my trade be na a'taegether ruined."

"Who said I did this? Where are your proofs?"

"Proofs? Haud yer fause, leein' tongue, or ye'll gar me tear it oot! Dinna doot, I hae proofs enow an' to spare. But whare pit ye yer ill-gotten

gains? Whare, I say? Gin ye gin na back ilka baubee to its lawfu' owner, Diel tak me, but I'll han' ye ower to be dealt wi' by the savages!"

"I can't give back what I hain't got," was the sullen answer.

"Stop whaur ye be, ye puir, little, drivelin', crawlin' reptile! Gin ye provoke me ane point mair, I'll lay han's on ye mysel. Stop, I say! I hae na tauld the half o' yer villainy. It has a' come to licht, the lees ye tauld Hambly and Doyle."

"What have I told them?" cried the accused, with a show of effrontery.

"About ma dealin's wi' the redskins. Ye hae tried to stir up mischief amang us. Ye hae tauld them I waur spreadin' tales an' lees about them. Ye hae spread reports that I am stirrin' up the redskins to mak war upon the Yankees, when ye weel know in yer fause heart I hae been ever workin' an' strivin' an' cryin' oot for peace."

"If you believe all the lies which that copperskin has been pourin' into your ears about me" —

"I do — I do, an' I hae guid cause."

"Let any man prove that I ever" —

"Hae dune wi' yer braggadocio! It'll nae gae doun wi' me. Proofs, said he? Here be proofs enow! See ye here! an' here! an' here! What hae ye noo to say? Is yer ain sign-manual proof, or no? Oh, awa wi' ye! Awa, oot o' my sight! Gang awa, oot o' ma house, afore the day's an hour aulder!"

"You are not g-going to send me away?"

"That am I, — that am I, as fast as yer rogue's legs'll carry ye."

“Wh-where can I go?”

“I care na, — I ken na. It’s a’ ane to me. Gae to them that hould dealin’s wi’ siccan snakes i’ the grass! Awa wi’ ye, I say! An’ ne’er darken my doorway, or come near til me, or speak til me, or I’ll na answer for my patience!”

Pale and crestfallen, Peter came forth from the interview. A half hour later, with his pack swung over his shoulder, he started off from the station. Reaching the edge of the woods, he suddenly turned, threw down his pack, and, extending both arms, shook his clenched fists as if cursing the house and its inmates.

CHAPTER XVIII.

VERY soon after the discharge of Peter, Arbuthnot and young Jock set sail for Nassau, leaving Zach, with a stout negro slave for attendant, in charge of the station.

For a time things went on as usual; then came a great and sudden influx of trade. Noting that the increased demand was all in the direction of ammunition, Zach asked the cause, and was told it was due to the approach of the hunting season.

The reason seemed good, and he was satisfied; but seeing his stock so rapidly diminish, he bethought him, before it was exhausted, to secrete a store for private use beneath the floor of the storehouse.

Deep was the chagrin of the late-comers when told that the supply had given out. Nothing would satisfy them of the truth of the statement but a thorough search of the premises.

Thereafter, trade fell off as rapidly as it had increased. The grass sprang up in the worn places before the storehouse door, and silence settled down upon the once bustling station. The few Indians who came spent their time prying and peering about instead of trading.

This discovery caused the young trader a natural uneasiness. He tried to persuade himself, however,

that it had no significance, and might have succeeded, but for a little incident which came to upset his theory.

Out gunning, one day, in his canoe, he floated a half-score miles down the river before noticing his whereabouts, and returning, made such slow headway against wind and tide that he was overtaken by nightfall before reaching home.

Hugging the shore, he paddled along in the fading light until, as he rounded a headland not far from the station, he was aroused by a call from the neighboring thicket. Dropping his paddle and seizing his rifle, he looked keenly towards the spot whence the voice proceeded, when directly the figure of a human being — whether man or woman he could not make out — stepped forth and, softly hallooing, beckoned him to approach.

With some hesitation he turned towards the shore and recognized Malee, who, stepping softly down to the water's edge, made him a signal not to land, while at the same time she leaned forward to speak.

“Keep off!”

“But why, then, did you” —

“Sh-h-h!”

“What do you want?”

“I have a word to speak to you.”

“A word?”

“Take care!”

“Eh?”

“Keep your eye always open over there,” pointing towards the station, “and” —

“And?”

“Go not so far away from home!”

Before the perplexed youth could ask any explanation, the speaker had vanished, and only the shrill cry of the tree-toad and the distant wail of the whip-poorwill awoke the echoes of the darkening forest.

The warning thus received, combined with the odd and suspicious behavior of the Indians, so filled Zach with misgiving that he was tempted more than once to take the negro and dog and paddle away down the river to the Gulf. Pride, however, seasonably interfered. The trader had left him in charge of his property; it was plainly his duty to watch over and defend it.

Thereafter, he was more cautious, forbade the negro to stray far away from the house, patrolled the neighboring forest by day, and slept with bolted doors and cocked pistols at night.

About a week after his meeting with Malee, he was surprised by a visit from a stranger, — a white man. The new-comer made some slight purchase as a pretext for his visit, but spent his time for the most part in asking questions and peering about. Put on his guard by this prying manner, Zach showed himself not only very chary in giving information, but quite wanting in the rude border hospitality usually extended to strangers. He had cause afterwards to approve his own caution when, the man having departed, Quimbo the negro came in, asking excitedly, —

“Wha’ he come yer fer?”

“Dunno. Who is he?”

“Dat ’s Mas’r Hambly.”

Remembering Arbuthnot's opinion of his visitor, Zach did not feel reassured by the incident; especially one bit of their talk came again and again to mind to puzzle and trouble him.

"Got old Bolecks for a neighbor, ain't ye?"

"Yeah."

"Wall, look out for him!"

"Why?"

"The old snake is hissin' agin."

"What 's the matter with him?"

"Too much of the devil in him to keep still. He 's gittin' the whole brood of copperskins stirred up. They 've got to goin' at their old tantrums agin, but," with a cunning look, "you don't care, of course."

"Eh?"

"What difference does it make to you if they scalp every white man 'twixt this an' the Gulf, as they threaten. You 're all safe."

"How so?"

"The old man here is so thick with 'em, they won't touch nothin' belongin' to him."

"Arbuthnot?"

"Yeah. They say he egged 'em on to this 'fore he went away."

"It 's a lie!" cried Zach, flaring up with a look so fierce that the visitor discreetly changed the subject.

Next day, to the extreme surprise of its solitary occupant, Jock, followed by a negro slave, walked into the station. Zach, who had imagined him half way to Nassau, could hardly believe his eyes. Jock

speedily explained that his father had heard so many disquieting rumors on his way to the Gulf of a threatened outbreak between the white men and the Indians, on account of the continued aggression of the Yankees, that it was thought better one of them should come back and help to watch over and guard their interests at the station.

In view of this sobering news, and of the special directions of the trader, the two youths, with the assistance of their slaves, diligently set to work packing up goods and peltry, making all things ready in case of need for an immediate removal.

This accomplished, they found little to do — for latterly their trade had fallen off entirely — save to supply from the natural sources about them the scanty needs of their larder, and to discuss plans of action in case of surprise.

Busied with this subject, one afternoon, Zach sat in the doorway, while Jock had gone a few rods down the river fishing, and the two slaves were hard at work in the woods near by making a dugout.

Save for an occasional murmur of talk from the negroes and the dull thud of their tools, a deep silence brooded over forest and river. The warm, languorous air, moreover, tempted to sleep, and accordingly Zach was about dozing off in the midst of his plans, when he was aroused by the strange behavior of his dog. In the very midst of a canine dream, the dog had suddenly started up, begun to bark, and to prick his ears towards a definite point of the forest. Glancing in that direction, Zach himself fancied he saw something move. Seizing his

gun, therefore, he walked rapidly towards the spot, followed by the growling dog.

Arrived at the edge of the woods, he cautiously advanced into the cover. Stopping to listen, he heard a faint crackling of dry twigs, as of some one stealthily withdrawing. Mounting the stump of a fallen tree, he was just in time to catch a glimpse of somebody gliding nimbly away into the deeper recesses of the forest. It was Malee.

Reassured, Zach was at the same time puzzled. On what errand was the girl hovering about the station? Had she come again to warn him of the same or some other impending danger? Or had she been brought by simple curiosity? Adopting the latter explanation, he returned to the house, and dismissed the matter from his thoughts.

Meantime, at intervals during the ensuing fortnight, the dog continued his odd behavior, appeared restive, broke forth into sudden and spasmodic fits of barking, stared at the forest now in this, now in that direction, sniffing and growling.

All this was disturbing, and despite some doughty resolutions to the contrary, the two youths found themselves ill at ease. The forest seemed bristling with unknown and innumerable foes. The air seemed thick with plots and mystery.

In this state of mind they hailed as a comfort the visit of a party of white men, who one morning drew up before the door. They easily recognized them for Yankees. The strangers wanted ammunition, and were much chagrined to be denied. When Zach, furthermore, with a view of establishing their

credit as traders, ingenuously acknowledged that a store of it had been brought over from Nassau, but that latterly large quantities had been sold to the Indians on account of the approach of the hunting season, the men whistled, and exchanged glances with one another.

One of them, moved perhaps by Zach's straightforward manner, turned back as they were about setting forth on their way, and whispered a warning that they had better get down the river forthwith into the protection of the forts, that a general war was impending, that the savages were aroused and organizing, and that the United States Government, stirred up by some late atrocities, had dispatched General Andrew Jackson, at the head of a large force, "to crush the whole brood of varmints, root and branch."

Convinced by the man's manner that he spoke the truth, Zach felt that the time for action had arrived, and after a long consultation with Jock, decided upon a very bold expedient. Relying upon the long and tried friendship existing between the Indians and Arbuthnot, he resolved to go at once to Bolecks, as the most powerful of the sachems, and ask of him some assurance or safeguard that, in the threatened hostilities, life and property at the trading-station should be respected.

He lost no time in carrying his plan into execution. Leaving the negroes and the dog for Jock's protection, he took his rifle, and set out for Bolecks's village. The distance was short, and the way well known. Arrived at the straggling but considerable

hamlet, he found it deserted, save by the old men, women, and children. He was told that Bolecks and his warriors were absent on a hunting expedition. With much difficulty, and after repeated explanations of his purpose, he was at last given the direction of their camp by a squaw who had been often at the station.

Intent upon effecting his purpose, he set forth upon the difficult and perilous undertaking of finding the Indian rendezvous. As the shortest course was by the river, he returned to the station and got his canoe. In this way, too, he could more easily take the necessary store of provisions and ammunition. His first day passed without adventure or mischance. At night he slept undisturbed in his canoe, and started on his way next morning without misgiving. About midday, as he reached a narrow part of the stream, he was aroused from his reveries by the loud crack of a rifle and the whistling of a bullet close above his head.

Directly thereupon, the woods resounded with a deafening yell, the thicket seemed to bristle with the muzzles of leveled rifles, and a score or more of ugly painted faces scowled upon him from the nearer shore.

Throwing down the paddles, Zach seized his rifle, but recognizing the folly of resistance, made a sign of surrender. Promptly three or four half-naked savages leaped into the stream, and dragged the little boat ashore, where its occupant was roughly disarmed and bound.

Although he understood nothing of the talk of his

captors, and could not make out to what tribe they belonged, the fact that their faces were daubed with paint, and that they were all heavily armed, showed plainly enough that they were on the war-path.

Let it not be supposed that Zach suffered himself to be taken away without a vigorous protest! Having no experience of their manner of talking, he blurted out what he had to say after his own fashion:—

“Look here, my friends, you’ve captured me, an’ I’ve got to go with you, because you are ten to one, but I want to say one thing: I’ve done you no harm. I hain’t meddled with you or your business. I don’t care anything about you, one way or the other. I’m a clerk of Arbuthnot’s. Arbuthnot is your friend. He is the only friend you’ve got among the whites, so far as I can make out. That’s his canoe yonder, an’ I’m going down to see old Bolecks on his business. You won’t gain anything by taking me off. You’ll only injure Arbuthnot. That’s all I got to say.”

The Indians affected not to understand, but he saw from their looks that they were lying. He made no further resistance or objection, but trudged stolidly on in the midst of the troop as they resumed their march.

At nightfall they arrived at a large encampment, where the prisoner saw at once that the rumors he had heard were only too well founded. That a general and organized revolt was on foot, he could have no further doubt; and from the grim looks of

the chiefs and warriors, he felt he had arrived at an unpropitious moment.

Noting with anxiety the reception accorded to his little band of captors, he was somewhat relieved by the grunt of indifference with which the old chief, to whom they reported, surveyed him.

Unhappily, a feast followed, during which much liquor was drunk, and a party of scouts arrived, who, as it seemed from their excited looks, brought unwelcome news. What with the whiskey and the inflammatory reports of the new-comers, the whole assemblage was gradually wrought up to such a pitch that when, in the course of the powwow, a chance allusion drew attention to the prisoner, there was a shout of exultation, as if one and all rejoiced to find so near at hand a scapegoat for their wrath.

Directly, a half dozen young braves ran to unbind Zach and lead him into the middle of the circle. As before, he made out nothing of their talk, but from their mood and looks was justified in auguring the worst.

There followed a chorus of conflicting suggestions as to the disposal of their victim, which was silenced by one of the chiefs, who, with some brief word of command, pointed to a neighboring tree.

In a twinkling Zach was stripped and bound to the jagged trunk. He submitted without protest, looking about attentively upon the circle as if with a purpose. Presently, through the disguise of war-paint, he recognized a face which he had seen before, — that of the Prophet Francis.

At the moment any chance was worth taking, and thereupon Zach made a vigorous effort to attract the attention of one who, as he knew, could at least understand him. His attempt was frustrated and his voice drowned by the loud shouts of those immediately about him.

Meantime, the preparations went on: a space was cleared and a big bonfire built upon one side of the tree, the glare of which, falling upon the bare white skin of the victim, brought it out in vivid relief against the dark background of the forest. A crowd of young warriors, gathered at a set distance, were waiting in eager impatience for the sport to begin. There was a pause, during which the competitors listened breathlessly for the word of command. In that brief moment of suspense, hurled by some reckless and tipsy hand, a tomahawk whistled through the air and struck with a sharp thud in the tree, above the victim's head.

In the tumult that followed, a young woman was seen to spring from the mass of exulting spectators, and place herself before the victim, facing his tormentors.

With a deep-drawn sigh of relief, Zach recognized the prophet's daughter.

Undeterred by the angry protests called forth by her action, and indifferent, as it seemed, to the threats of the tipsy young braves whose sport she was spoiling, Malee held her place, while in a bold and impetuous appeal she addressed the chiefs. Owing to the confusion and uproar, her speech was inaudible and failed of effect.

Irritated by her persistence, an overbold young warrior strode forward and, seizing her by the arm, attempted to thrust her out of the way. Drawing a knife from her girdle, the incensed girl turned upon him with a fury which made him recoil, and thereupon Hillishajo's potent voice was heard bidding the assailant begone.

Thus left in possession of the field, Malee failed not to take full advantage of her opportunity. Continuing her appeal now to attentive ears, she soon succeeded, by force of reason or eloquence, in producing an impression upon the listening chiefs.

Hillishajo came forward and condescended to scrutinize the prisoner. Failing to recognize him, he turned, with a look of doubt, to his daughter. Zach, seeing his chance, put in his oar, and quietly reminded the prophet of his visit to the station in English dress on the occasion when he had given Malee the mirror.

Thereupon, the prophet withdrew and held a conference with the other chiefs; they deliberated for several minutes, while Malee defiantly held her place between the bloodthirsty warriors and their victim.

Deep was the anger and disgust of these young cutthroats when the decision was announced. For the moment the captive's life was spared, his clothes were restored, and he was removed under guard to the outskirts of the circle. As throughout the ordeal he had shown firmness of nerve, so now he took care to betray no satisfaction upon his escape. Indeed, from the sullen and threatening looks of the

crowd through which he passed, he realized that any feeling of congratulation was yet premature.

As he was led away, he looked eagerly around for Malee, but she had already disappeared.

Next day camp was broken, the Prophet Francis (Hillishajo), with a small party, turned back on some hurried errand to St. Marks, while the main body pushed on through the forest, to what destination or for what purpose the prisoner was left to surmise. He, although unbound, was given in charge of two young warriors, who marched on either side with loaded rifles.

A second and a third day found them still on the march, and being accorded scant rations and little rest, the whole party began to look the worse for wear. Happily, their course was at an end. At nightfall they arrived at their destination, an island in a vast swamp, where they found assembled a large multitude of Indians of various tribes, all encamped in much disorder.

A night of commotion was followed by a day of turmoil. The constant arrival of small parties of scouts and tardy contingents, each bringing reports of some new outrage or aggression of the enemy, kept the passions of the mass at fever-heat. The fierce eyes gleaming forth from the bedaubed faces of these new-comers and the bleeding scalps hanging from their belts could not have proved a reassuring spectacle for the prisoner.

An unusual commotion followed the arrival of one of these parties. Eager to see what was going on, Zach's guards dragged him forward towards Bo-

lecks's wigwam, which seemed the headquarters of the army. There, what was the prisoner's astonishment to see Jock standing before the assembled sachems, reading aloud to them the following letter from his father, —

“FORT ST. MARK, 2 April, 1818,
9 o. c. in the morning.

“DEAR JOHN, — As I am ill able to write a long letter, it is necessary to be brief. Before my arrival here the commandant had received an express from the governor of Pensacola informing him of a large embarkation of troops, etc., under the immediate command of General Jackson, and the boat that brought the dispatch reckoned eighteen sail of vessel off Appalachicola. By a deserter that was brought here by the Indians, the commandant was informed that three thousand men under the orders of General Jackson — one thousand men afoot, sixteen hundred horse under General Gaines, five hundred under another general — were at Prospect Bluffs. . . .

“Late in the afternoon three schooners came to anchor at the mouth of the river, and this morning the American flag is seen flying over the largest. I am blocked here. . . . The main drift of the Americans is to destroy the black population at Suwany. Tell my friend Bolecks that it is throwing away his people to attempt to resist such a powerful force. . . . Endeavor to get all the goods across the river to a place of security, and also the skins of all sorts. The corn must be left to its fate. Soon as the Sahwahnee is destroyed, I expect the Amer-

icans will be satisfied and retire. . . . Himathlo and Hillishajo were here last night. . . . They will remove all their cattle and effects across St. Marks River, and perhaps wait near thereto for the event. . . .

“If the schooner is returned, get all the goods on board of her and let her start off for Monater Creek in the bottom of Cedar Key bay. You will then have only the skins to hide away. But let no delay take place. . . . Let the bearer have as much calico as will make him two shirts. . . .

I am yours affectionately,

A. ARBUTHNOT.”

Well had it been for young Jock if, when he had finished reading this letter, he had cast it into the camp-fire at his feet. In a fatal moment he handed it to Bolecks. Its contents caused a profound sensation. It had the immediate effect of restoring the lost prestige of Alexander Arbuthnot. The chiefs saw now that their suspicions of their old friend were unfounded. But his warning came too late. They were too deeply aroused to heed wholesome advice from any quarter. The gods had made them mad, and madly they rushed on to destruction.

His audience with the chiefs concluded, Jock withdrew to find rest and refreshment. His wants were eagerly attended to. As he sat, soon after eating, in a neighboring wigwam, he felt himself touched lightly upon the arm. Turning, he recognized Malee. In obedience to her imperative signal, he rose with much reluctance from his half-finished

supper and followed her. Having led the way to the outskirts of the encampment, she paused in the shadow of a large tree and pointed to a group of three persons seated about a fire. In one of them, to his measureless astonishment, he recognized Zach.

It was a joyous meeting. In a few minutes, Zach explained his predicament. Forthwith Jock betook himself to headquarters, where he scrupled not to invade the powwow of the chiefs and establish the identity of the prisoner.

Grateful for the late show of friendliness on the part of the trader, the sachems, without more ado, gave orders that the prisoner be released and be allowed to proceed on his journey.

As the object of his mission had been unexpectedly accomplished by Arbuthnot's letter, Zach had nothing to do but return with Jock to the station, and carry out as speedily as possible the directions in the letter.

Accordingly, having procured from Bolecks a guide, they started next morning early on their homeward way, Zach having first made a hasty survey of the camp in hopes that he might have a word with Malee. Finding no trace of her, he concluded that she had been one of a party of squaws sent back the previous day to Suwanee.

Hardly, however, had they got beyond the immediate neighborhood of the encampment, when they came upon the girl walking alone in the forest. She started at sight of them, and was about to make off, when Zach called for her to stop.

Hurrying up, he held out his hand. Malee, with

downcast eyes, plucked in a shamefaced way at her skirt, and affected not to see it.

"You saved my life," began Zach, bluntly; "no matter whether it was worth saving or not, it was a great thing for you to do. Those ruffians were going to hack me up for their fun, and you stopped it. I don't know what made you take such a risk for me. But you did, and that's enough. I saw it. I felt it, and I thank you from the bottom of my heart. I sha'n't forget you, and I sha'n't forget what you did, and I hope you will shake hands with me before I go."

Flushing pink through her dark skin, Malee shyly touched her hand to his and then darted away, shaking the dew from the underbrush and startling the birds from their coverts in her fawn-like flight.

CHAPTER XIX.

“LET it be signified to me through any channel . . . that the possession of the Floridas would be desirable to the United States,” wrote Andrew Jackson from The Hermitage, to President Monroe at the White House, “and in sixty days it will be accomplished.”

President Monroe, being sick abed, did not feel up to reading the tiresome-looking letter handed him by his Secretary of State, and so tucked it under the pillow to await his mood and leisure.

As time and again airier nothings than this have changed the course of history, it need be no cause for wonder that this small incident gave the current of contemporaneous events a very perceptible twist, for thus it chanced that the maddest of mad bulls was let loose in the international china-shop, or, in other words, that the doughty Andrew afore-said, hearing nothing of the letter tucked under the presidential pillow, and taking silence for assent, straightway raised an army on his own hook and started off on one of the most extraordinary marauding expeditions known to history.

Sojourning upon Spanish soil, a guest of the commandant of a Spanish fort, Arbuthnot heard without misgiving of the approach of Andrew Jackson and his army. With a conscience void of

offense, protected by the flag of a powerful nation, he had personally no cause for concern. So it seemed; in point of fact, however, he was destined to be speedily and rudely awaked from a peace founded upon such crude and old-time reasoning.

Not less startling than a cyclone was the advent of the Yankee leader to the sleepy southern peninsula. The earth seemed to shake, the air to be stirred at his approach. Despite the fact that Spain and the United States were at peace, despite certain puerile considerations of international law, despite other stale moral distinctions of right and wrong, the unceremonious American scrupled not to swoop down upon the unoffending commandant of St. Marks, turn him neck and crop out of doors, take possession of his stronghold, and shake out the stars and stripes above its ramparts.

Collecting his dazed wits, and concluding very wisely, under the circumstances, that as a British subject his own room would be better than his company, the worthy Scotchman mounted his horse, in the bustle attending upon the evacuation, and was about to ride away upon his business, when he was arrested and made a prisoner.

Meanwhile Zach and young Arbuthnot, having, according to the trader's directions, buried the bulk of their goods and skins in a secure place near the station, took to their canoes, paddled down the river, and arrived safely on board the schooner, which they found standing off and on near the mouth of the Suwanee, awaiting the return of its owner from a visit to his old friend the commandant.

Aware of the arrival of the American army, and uneasy at the trader's prolonged absence, Zach, leaving the Chance in charge of his companion, went ashore to reconnoitre.

Arriving at the town, he was bewildered to hear of the arrest of Arbuthnot. Warned by so unaccountable a proceeding to keep clear of the fort, he loitered in the neighborhood, watching for an opportunity to communicate with his employer. Hearing by chance of the presence of some Indians in the neighborhood, he sought them out, hoping to learn the reason of the old Scotchman's imprisonment.

They proved to be a detachment of Seminoles under the Prophet Francis, who, having successfully conveyed his cattle across the river, was now encamped with his little band on the opposite side to note the movements of the enemy.

Great was the wrath of Hillishajo on hearing of Arbuthnot's arrest. Directly, the last cloud of suspicion melted into thin air, and it was accepted as sufficient proof of the trader's loyalty to the Indians that he was treated as an enemy by the Yankees. With a profound contempt for that mongrel people, acquired during his residence in London, the Prophet was for rescuing his old friend by a night attack on the fort. To this end he sent out scouts to learn the most assailable point of the stronghold.

As Zach could countenance no such attack upon his own countrymen, he was greatly embarrassed by the sachem's enthusiasm.

Cudgeling his brain for some way out of the difficulty, he was unexpectedly relieved by the sud-

den arrival of Malee with a party from the interior, bringing news from Bolecks and the allied chieftains, and summoning the Prophet to repair with all haste to Suwanee.

Constrained by this imperative call, Hillishajo reluctantly gave up the attempt to release the prisoner, but assured Zach that if General Jackson dared to invade the Indian country as he had threatened, he would there fall into an ambush which was preparing for him, and together with his army be utterly destroyed, when it would be an easy matter to reinstate the commandant and deliver Arbuthnot.

Zach readily accepted the excuse, and in further testimony of his good-will, accepted the Prophet's invitation to pass the night in camp.

Next morning, what was the surprise and joy of the Indians, on getting up, to behold a war-vessel near the mouth of the river flying the British flag. The Prophet could hardly contain himself. He grunted like a savage. He swore like a white man. Here was one strong enough to put down the blustering Yankee. Here in the very nick of time were his old and faithful friends come to his rescue.

Taking Himollemico, one of his chiefs, for attendant, the Prophet lost no time in rowing over to pay his respects to the new-comers.

His followers, meanwhile, waited on shore in confident expectation of his cordial welcome. From their outlook upon the river's bluff they could dimly see what took place on the vessel's deck.

The chiefs were promptly hoisted on board, were received with apparent cordiality by the officers of

the vessel, and, after a little conversation, were shown below. An hour, two hours, ten hours passed, and they did not reappear. The long day wore away, and still the group of watchers stood anxiously waiting. At sunset there was a movement on board the vessel. With one accord a cry of rage and despair burst from the Indians. The English flag had been hauled down, and the American colors run up in its place.

At last the dumfounded savages understood. They had been duped by a Yankee trick. Their chiefs had been lured on board a Yankee vessel.

Straightway they held a council of war. It was evident from their looks that they were discussing desperate measures. The powwow was interrupted by a cry from Malee. She was standing on the bluff, pointing at the vessel. All looked, and in dogged silence beheld the vessel weigh anchor and slowly sail up to a position under the protection of the guns of the fort.

In futile rage the baffled warriors regarded one another, at a loss what to do; their plans of reprisal had been defeated by this simple movement.

At this juncture Malee stepped forth, and in a few imperative words assumed direction of affairs. Whether recognizing her authority or the wisdom of her advice, nobody gainsaid her.

Understanding not a word that was said about him, Zach could only guess what was doing. From the fact that runners were sent off in hot haste to various points of the compass, he gathered that, whatever their purpose, it was not to be carried out without recruits and coöperation.

Although he let it be known that his sympathies were with them, Zach made no offer of service to his red friends. He could take no part in any hostile movement against his own countrymen. This feeling seemed to be recognized by the Indians, for they did not consult him in their plans.

Inclined at first to attribute this delicacy on their part to a hint from Malee, Zach presently altered his mind. The girl seemed wholly unconscious of his presence. When they met, she looked through him, around him, past him, but never at him. Filled with forebodings as to her father's fate, every faculty of her heart and soul seemed intent on compassing his deliverance.

In a moment, by this sharp stroke of experience, she had been transformed from an unconsidered girl to a tragedy queen.

Nor was this moral development wanting in impressive physical signs. Quite unconsciously she took on a largeness of gesture and grandness of mien which Zach regarded with silent wonder.

Pending the return of their messengers, the night was spent by the Indians about the council fire. With the earliest dawn they broke camp, and under cover of the woods moved along the shore to a promontory directly over against the fort and within easy range of its guns. Here everything which took place within the works or on the vessel could be seen.

They arrived as if by appointment to assist at a spectacle. There was a movement on the ramparts of the fort. Soon after sunrise some men appeared

bearing timbers, from which they proceeded to make a rude structure whose purpose was not apparent, — the Indians with breathless interest marking every blow of the hammer, which was seen to strike the wood a full half minute before the sound of the impact could be heard across the stream. At last the thing was done. The workmen went away. There was an interval of silence, during which the stage was deserted. Then began the second act. A group of men in uniform appeared. They looked about and talked. One of them made a gesture of command. Presently another group advanced. The watchers uttered a cry of consternation. It was a squad of soldiers escorting their chiefs.

The drama now moved swiftly on through its third and final act. The officer in command made another gesture. The arms and legs of the prisoners were bound, a noose was thrown over their necks, and with no more circumstance or ceremony than would have sufficed a dog, they were swung writhing and struggling aloft to the scaffold.

Deaf to the hoarse cry of rage and grief which burst from her followers, the daughter of the Prophet stood upon the edge of the bluff, with her eyes fixed steadfastly upon this ghastly scene, — stood without word or movement, — stood as if she had been changed to stone.

After a space Zach, moved by compassion, ventured to go to her. He was shocked by the change wrought in her looks. The roundness of youth was gone. The eyes were hollow; the nose looked hawk-like in its aquiline sharpness, while tense lines about

the mouth gave an aspect of grimness to the lower face.

Countrymen or no countrymen, Zach now blurted out his opinion.

"'T is murder they have done yonder, whoever they be. A brutal murder it is. A crime against mankind and against nations. Nothing can ever wipe out the guilt of it!"

The girl gave no sign of having heard.

"I pity you, Malee. I pity you with all my heart. I wish I could do something for you!"

The words stuck in his throat. They seemed empty and hollow, and mockingly inadequate. Why did he waste his breath? The girl did not heed him. He went closer to her, and gently touched her arm. She turned mechanically. He was appalled by her look of suffering.

"Remember," he faltered, hardly knowing what he said, — "remember I am your friend, and I will stand by you!"

His words never reached her mind. She gave no sign of having heard them as she turned her staring eyes back upon those dangling bodies.

A sensible creeping of the flesh emphasized the moment for after-remembrance, for, united with the dumb, unformulated grief in the sufferer's face, the beholder detected a look of deadly, blighting vindictiveness.

Meantime, brute force held sway, and was not to be stayed by a woman's heart-ache. The swift march of events left no time to think of the past, to plan for the future. It was only left to act in the

whirring present; to choose a part and take it; to move in the van, or be overborne and trampled on by the victorious feet of the invader.

Striking the keynote of his campaign by this act of treachery and murder, the next day Jackson was away on a forced march to the eastward, to fall upon Bolecks and his confederates, and crush at one blow the whole Indian power.

Upon the withdrawal of the American army, Zach made an attempt to see Arbuthnot. As it was not yet known upon what charge he was arrested, the old Scotchman was not rigorously dealt with, and accordingly, after a proper examination as to motives, his clerk was admitted to see him.

Entering the cell, Zach found the trader reading a battered copy of Burns's poems, which he always carried in his pocket. Recognizing his visitor, he quietly went on repeating aloud the concluding stanza of the poem he was reading, —

“ ‘The best laid schemes o’ mice and men
Gang aft a-gley;
And leave us naught but grief and pain
For promised joy.’ ”

“Well!” exclaimed Zach, astonished at his employer’s equanimity, and not knowing what else to begin with.

“Aweel, lad.”

“What are you doing here, sir?”

“Little or naething, as ye may see. But a body could be doin’ a waur thing than reading Bobby Burns, God bless him! He’s been a comforter to me in mony a dark hour lang syne.”

"What right had they to take you?"

"Na, gae to them that knaw wi' yer riddles. 'Tis a short answer wad serve them. Muckle might maks muckle right, I ween; 'tis the strang arm settles the questions."

"If you had told them you were a British subject" —

"Hout toot! 'tis there lies a' the trouble; an' I had been ane o' the Yankees, they wad na hae pit me intil a dungeon wi'out sae muckle as by yer leave."

"But if you have done them no wrong" —

"Ay, but I hae."

"What?"

"The same harm ilka pair little fule-lamb does to the wolf, — I hae commeted the offense o' being born."

"But," persisted Zach, now, as always, impatient of humor, "when he comes back, when he hears the facts, he must release you."

"Wha kens?" murmured the trader, resignedly. "But enow o' me. Tell me noo how gaes it wi' ye lads?"

"All well."

"Ye got yon letter o' mine?"

"Yes."

"Guid! I misdoubted the redskin. An' the gear — the peltry?"

"All hid under ground, as you said."

"'Tis weel; ye 're guid lads, — and ye left a' snug at the station?"

"The best we knew how."

“But where left ye the bit schooner?”

“At the mouth of the river, with Jock in charge.”

“Jock in charge, — Jock in charge, say ye? ’T is as muckle as yer life ’s worth to stay yonder anither hour. Awa wi’ ye, and pit oot to sea! The Yankee cruisers are as thick as hornets all about.”

“We heard of this business, and I came to see what could be done.”

“Dinna fash yer head about me! Think o’ the schooner, and the pretty cargo we hae; gin onything gaes wrang wi’ ane or tither, wha ’s to answer?”

“I ’ll answer for everything, if I can only get you out of this,” answered Zach boldly.

“Ye can do naething, — naething, I say. I maun bide my time. When yon law-breaking, blude-thirsty ruffian has rin his course and finds he canna pit finger on onything agin me, he ’ll mayhap let me gae free, but ye can do naething to help or hinder; sae gang yer gait back to the Chance; I ’ll do weel enow by mysel’.”

Zach took his leave, but chose otherwise to disregard his orders. Having nothing to do, and no acquaintance in the little Spanish town, he made his way instinctively to the water-side.

There, seated on the grass beside a path which led to the shore, he reflected upon the situation of affairs, and upon the course he ought to pursue. The outspread landscape before him lay like a picture, with its nice distribution of light and shade, serene in effect, tranquilizing in its quietude, — the river shut in by densely-wooded shores, flowing with ever-broadening current to its union with the sea;

the vessels at anchor midstream, with their hulls and rigging mirrored in the gleaming water, and all flushed with yellow light from the setting sun.

As he gazed and pondered, he heard voices approaching, and was vaguely conscious of two men going along the path on their way to the river. As they passed the rock where he was seated, he perceived that they were naval officers, and noted their uniforms.

Following them with preoccupied eyes, he saw them proceed to the shore, step aboard a dingy which lay awaiting them at the landing, and push out into the stream. Rowed by two stout tars, they yet made but slow progress against the strong current.

To add to the variety of the picture, a new feature was now introduced. Shooting suddenly out from behind a wooded point appeared an Indian canoe. Paddled by an expert hand it skimmed over the water like a bird, seeming scarcely to touch its surface.

Turning upstream on a parallel course with the dingy, it steadily and swiftly overhauled that clumsy craft.

Awaking from his preoccupation, Zach looked on with interest and attention, — a human element had been added to the scene. It was a race of one against four. But the race was not to be to the swift. The victor suddenly threw away the laurel already within reach. The Indian in the canoe, when within fifty yards of the dingy, threw down the paddles and rose to his feet with something in

his hands. Directly, there was a puff of smoke, a sharp crack, and one of the officers in the boat fell backward.

Zach sprang to his feet with a loud oath.

On board the dingy, the attention of all was at first centred upon the dying officer, and no one heeded the movements of the canoe. The occurrence, however, had been seen on board the gunboats, both of which turned their long guns on the bold culprit. Their bolts fell wide of the tiny mark. The Indian reached the shore in safety, and vanished in the covert.

Zach sprang to his feet. He marked the spot and measured the distance with his eye. It was on his own side of the river, and not a half mile from where he stood. Drawing a pistol from his belt, he dashed through the woods with might and main in the hope of cutting off the assassin's retreat.

His movement was more quickly successful than he could have expected. Rushing on at headlong pace, he heard a noise. It was repeated, it seemed continuous. Was it going away from or coming towards him? Creeping forward like a panther, he halted every other minute to listen. The sound continued. It was clearer, and nearer at hand.

Reaching a little opening in the thicket, Zach paused again to assure himself that he was not mistaken. No, there could no longer be any doubt; the rustling of boughs, the snapping of dry twigs, heralded the approach of a living creature.

Cocking his pistol, Zach stood upon his guard. He had hardly placed himself, when, forth from the

covert in panting haste rushed the breathless refugee, — it was Malee!

Dressed in the garb of her tribe, with her long hair floating like a dusky shadow upon her shoulders, the eagle plume denoting her rank rising from the circlet on her forehead, with her cheeks burning, her eyes glowing with a look of exultation, in which no touch of guilt or shame had place, her whole personality produced an overpowering effect of heroism before which her would-be captor faltered in his intent.

But the girl's quick eye had noted his weapon. Casting away her rifle, she spread wide her arms, crying, —

“Fire! Malee's work done. It not matter now. He come to life no more, that one! He hang no more Indian! Fire! White man's turn now. I like it better from your hand than theirs. Sh-h! Quick! they come to rob you of the chance. Fire!”

CHAPTER XX.

A TIMELY diversion saved the life of Malee and drew Zach from an awkward predicament. No makeshift incident of the story-teller was this, but an historical event, more or less familiar to students of the Seminole War.

Having cut to pieces and dispersed the motley army of Indians and negroes under Bolecks and his slave Nero at Suwanee, having burnt their town and destroyed their stores, General Jackson, flushed with victory, came marching back to St. Marks.

It was the flourish of trumpets announcing his approach which awakened the whole neighborhood to excitement.

Salutes from the fort and thundering salvos from the gunboats heralded the advent of the hero, and amid the universal blare all lesser questions were lost sight of.

Returned, the winding up of the campaign was a small matter for the conqueror. The Georgia contingent and the Indian allies were already dismissed. Forts were rapidly building to secure the conquered territory and hold in check the beaten savages and humbled Spaniards. There remained only the trivial business of disposing of his prisoners: to wit, the trader Arbuthnot, and one Ambrister, captured on their march to the Suwanee.

Having established his camp four miles north of St. Marks, General Jackson addressed himself to the business. There being nothing important to hinder, it was thought well to invest this closing scene of the campaign with a show of procedure.

To the surprise, no doubt, of those familiar with his executive impulses, the general ordered a court-martial to inquire into the cases of the prisoners.

To Zach and young Arbuthnot this news brought great relief. A court! A trial! The words were synonymous with acquittal. The more thoroughly the record of the trader was inquired into, the more heinous must appear the indignity to which he had been subjected.

The general, having put the matter into proper hands for adjustment, busied himself at headquarters preparing his dispatches for Washington, and let justice take its course.

The day came, and with all due solemnity the court opened, — an impressive body, composed of thirteen commissioned officers, presided over by a major-general.

Zach, who had been summoned as a witness, watched every step of the proceedings with closest interest.

“Gaines, — Gaines,” he said, repeating to himself the name of the president, and reviving certain vague impressions. Was not this the man concerned in a certain affair at Fowltown which, despite all the glozes of history, sentimental persons still speak of as an infamy?

From the president his eye wandered with inquir-

ing eagerness to the other members of the court, — officers returned from fighting the savages at Suwanee, and thus admirably fitted to sit in judgment on all supposed aiders and abettors of the vanquished foe.

Withal, Zach did not feel reassured from this survey of the court. On the contrary, to tell truth, he was filled with foolish apprehensions. His sole crumb of comfort was the calm aspect of the prisoner. Familiar as he was with the trader's appearance, he had never before noted it so critically. The man's large, forceful head, rendered venerable by its snow-white hair, his rugged features, his benign yet shrewd expression and gravity of manner, all combined to make him by far the most notable-looking person in the room.

Zach paid closest heed as the trial progressed. The offenses of the prisoner were formulated under several charges, the gist of which was, —

- a. That he had acted as a spy.
- b. That he had incited the Indians to war against the United States.
- c. That he had supplied them with the means of carrying it on.

Little used as he was to judicial proceedings, Zach was nevertheless staggered by the evidence adduced in support of these charges.

One witness was a nameless Indian, who swore he had seen a letter which Arbuthnot had written to the chief, Little Prince, a year and more before (which letter could not be produced), inciting him to war against the United States.

Other witnesses were Hambly and Peter Cook. A specially damning piece of evidence was the trader's letter to his son, before cited, which was found in the possession of one of Bolecks's chiefs taken prisoner.

Ingenuous Jock, instead of being overwhelmed on the production of this instrument, beamed with delight, supposing that nothing could so well show the innocence of the letter as the letter itself. He was yet to learn how plain talk could be perverted.

When the evidence was all in, the prisoner summed up the case in his own behalf. With a truly lawyer-like acumen, he applied himself directly to the gravamen of the accusation, and with what effect all the world may now judge, for his plea still stands upon our records for all the world to read.

Dropping entirely his dear Scotch dialect, and speaking in well-chosen English, the old man thus reviewed the case of the government:—

“The only proof,” adverting to the letter seen by the Indian in Little Prince's hands, “that this honorable court has of the existence of such a letter being in the hands of any person, or its contents being known, is the vagrant memory of a vagrant individual. Make this a rule of evidence, and I ask you where would implication, construction, and invention stop? Whose property, whose reputation, and whose life would be safe? Here I would beg leave to mention a remark made by the president of this court in the course of this investigation, which was that, notwithstanding the letter was proved by the witness to be in the possession of Little Prince,

this court could not notice that circumstance because there were no means by which it could be obtained. I would ask the honorable court what means they have adopted or what exertions they have made to procure this letter?"

With equal force he discussed the evidence of the letter addressed to his son.

"If the court please, this letter was written in consequence of my property at Suwanee and the large debts that were due me from Bowlegs and his people. Nothing, I believe, of an inflammatory nature can be found on reading the document, authorizing the opinion that I was prompting the Indians to war. On the contrary, if the honorable court will examine the document, they will see that I wished to lull their fears by informing them that it was the negroes, and not the Indians, the Americans were principally moving against. If the honorable court please, I will make a few remarks upon the second specification, and here close my defense.

"In proof of this charge the court have before them the evidence of Hambly, Cook, and sundry letters purporting to be written by myself to different individuals. May it please the court, what does Cook prove? Why, that I had ten kegs of powder at Suwanee. Let me appeal to the experience of this court, if they think this quantity of powder would supply one thousand Indians and an equal number of blacks more than two months for hunting? As to the letters named in this specification, may it please the court, the rules of evidence laid down in the first part of this defense will apply with equal force in the present case.

“It remains now, may it please the court, to say something as to Hambly’s testimony; and may it please this honorable court, the rule laid down in this case as to hearsay evidence will be found without a precedent. A strong case was stated by an intelligent member of this court on the examination of this part of the evidence; that is, would you receive as testimony what a third person had said, whom, if present, you would reject as incompetent? Apply this principle to the present case: could an unknown Indian be examined on oath in our courts of judicature? If then the testimony of savages is inadmissible, Hambly proves nothing.

“Here, may it please this honorable court, I close my reply to the charges and specifications preferred against me, being fully persuaded that, should there be cause for censure, my judges will, in the language of the law, lean to the side of mercy.”

This ended the trial, so far as it concerned Arbuthnot. Eagerly, anxiously, in the dead silence which ensued after the prisoner had been remanded to his cell, Zach scanned the faces of the court. They looked troubled and thoughtful. Surely, they must have been impressed by the trader’s speech.

Firm in this conviction, Zach withdrew with the other spectators, and left the court to its deliberation.

Pending its decision, he received a message from Arbuthnot begging to confer with him. The interview was permitted with reluctance, and only upon the urgent petitions of the prisoner.

On entering the little cell, Zach warmly congrat-

ulated its inmate upon his appearance at the trial and his effective defense.

"I dinna ken, I dinna ken. I hae dune the best I could, an' I maun e'en leave the rest to Him wha rules the just and the unjust. But I 'm recht glad o' a word wi' ye, lad, whilk-ever way thae yonder may deceede the matter."

"They can only decide it in one way," broke in Zach emphatically.

"Sae I hope, lad, sae I hope my ain sel', but a plain tale gets sair twisted i' the tellin', an' the rogues, Peter an' Hambly, are i' high favor wi' the Yankee general. For a' that, I say again, whilk-ever way it goes wi' me, 't is the pairt o' a wise mon aye to hope for the best and prepare for the warst. Sae whiles time and chance haud guid, I wad gie ye a hint o' the deesposition to be made o' my affairs gin the warst come to the verra warst."

Accustomed to his employer's caution and foresight, Zach listened with patience to what he considered needless suggestions.

"Gin this matter gaes against me, — as pray God it may na do, — lose ye nae time, lad, in finding oot Jock, — the puir bairn was wi' me here a minute sin', but wad na hear a ward o' onythin' but that a' will go weel wi' me, and I had na the heart to dispute him, — lose ye nae time, I say, in sarchin' him oot an' giein' him my last wishes."

Zach nodded, with a look of good-natured indulgence of this moribund weakness.

"Tell him," pursued the trader earnestly, "na to bide anither hour hereabouts, but get him awa as

soon as may be wi' the Chance up the river, dig up the skins an' the goods where ye hae hid them, — there 'll be some o' yer ain amang them, whilk I trust to yer honor to share fairly wi' Jock as the accounts may show."

"I'll try and deal fairly with him," murmured the listener.

"Mak what trade ye can wi' the redskins for the chattels left ower, — a bad bargain is better than to tak 'em back hame. The savages maun be in sair straits for a' things needfu' to support life sin' yon roisterin' earle, — God forgie me for judgin' onybody when He has said judgment is his ain! — sin yon man o' war has burnt an' ruined an' destroyed a' their gear. For the rest, tell Jock frae this oot to hae dune wi' this soort o' tradin'! It has na been wi'out some sma' profit i' times past an' gane, but it is na what it was, and is like to be ower muckle a risk in the future. Tell him to bide at hame in Nassau, an' be content wi' sic sma' crumbs o' trade as ane may pick up yonder. Gin he choose to remain idle for the rest o' his days, — whilk God forbid! — he has enow and mair to keep the wolf frae the door. But gang yer gait noo! I hae dune! Gang yer gait, like a guid lad. Leave me to what sma' rest I may get in sic a place. An' for this maitter yonder, God's will be dune!"

Promising faithfully to repeat these instructions to Jock in case of need, Zach withdrew with a parting word of comfort.

Thereupon, for want of other lodgings, he repaired to the schooner, which, although it had been

seized and was technically under arrest, was suffered to remain in the custody of its own crew.

There, just before daybreak, he was awakened by the announcement that an Indian had paddled out in a canoe and demanded to see him.

With his eyes full of sleep, Zach groped his way up on deck, and stood several minutes leaning over the taffrail, before he could clearly make out the messenger bobbing up and down in his little craft.

"What do you want?" he asked impatiently.

The savage drew a small, round object from beneath his blanket and held it up. By the gleam of the stern light, Zach recognized the little hand-mirror which he had given Malee.

"You come from her?"

The Indian nodded.

"What do you want?"

"Chiefs say, 'Old man, young man, they die.'"

"The court say that?"

The messenger nodded again, and continued, —
"To-day for them, to-morrow for you, — all friends of red man must die. You have ship, — go while can!"

Overwhelmed by the news, Zach stood for some time incapable of speech or motion. Far from heeding Malee's warning with regard to himself, he bethought him only of some expedient whereby he might yet save his employer's life.

There was no time to waste, nor was there any choice of ways and means. One man alone could intervene between the court and its sentence, and

that was General Jackson. To appeal to him was, therefore, the only alternative.

Rowing in haste to the shore, Zach seized the first horse he met upon the street, and, despite the unintelligible threats and imprecations of its Spanish owner, galloped off in the direction of the camp. The gray light of coming day showed him the bridle path. The leaves of the forest trees were glistening with dew, and overhanging branches splashed his feverish face with their cool drippings as he flew along. The air was filled with the matins of the song-birds and the fragrance of wild shrubs.

Insensible to all this charm of freshness and sweetness, Zach rode on, deeply preoccupied. Doubts and misgivings as to the result of his mission might well beset him. He thought of all he had ever heard of the redoubtable man to whom he was about to appeal, — the record was far from reassuring. In his suspense, too, he was tormented by smaller doubts; the way seemed endlessly long; he might have gone astray.

This doubt was soon dispelled, for presently he arrived at the spot and beheld — not an encampment, but its remains! Where was the army? It needed no ghost come from the grave to answer. The ground was strewn with the unsightly evidence of its late occupation. Far and near the place was defiled by the obscene havoc of humanity.

Zach stopped aghast. Was he, then, too late? There was something astir near by, in the forest. Riding forward he came upon a group of men leisurely breaking camp. They were all officers, —

staff officers. His eye brightened. He had guessed the truth: it was the general himself and his staff, making ready to follow the slower movements of the main body.

Riding straight towards the group, Zach answered bluntly two or three officers who strove to intercept him: —

“I want to see General Jackson!”

“What is your business?”

“My business is with him.”

“Let him come!”

In obedience to this authoritative tone, the officer fell back, and Zach, advancing, found himself in the presence of the commanding general.

A tall, spare figure, bareheaded, and in his shirt-sleeves, sitting on a log writing dispatches, was Zach's first impression of this famous man.

“Well, sir, what do you want?” was the sharp demand, as, having finished a sentence, the writer looked up and disclosed a long, lean face, a narrow, forceful forehead, crowned with bristling iron-gray hair, and lighted up by a pair of piercing aquiline eyes.

Intent only upon his purpose, Zach took no note of these small matters, but answered with directness,

“I come to ask a favor.”

“Go on!”

“To ask you to do an act of justice.”

“Out with it!”

“To show mercy to that innocent man they have condemned yonder.”

“Who is that?” with darkening brows.

"Alexander Arbuthnot!"

"That damned villain!"

"He is no villain," was the bold retort.

"Take care!" with kindling eyes.

"He is an injured, innocent man. I know him. I know what I say. Those fools yonder have found him guilty of stirring up the Indians to fight. He did nothing of the sort!"

"Eh!"

"Nothing," firmly. "He was forever bidding them keep the peace" —

"I have heard all these lies before."

"He cautioned, he warned, he held them back. It was like holding back a lot of bloodhounds. But for him there would have been continual scalplings and bloodshed all along the border these years past."

"What proofs of this?"

"My oath!"

"And who are you? You may be another British spy!"

"I am no more a British spy than you," cried Zach, flaming up. "I am an American citizen. I have fought and bled, too, for my country as well as you. But I am a human being for all that, and I will not stand by without a word and see an innocent man hung like a dog!"

This bold protest had a momentary effect. The general gazed with a passing respect upon the speaker, as if inclined to heed him, but yielding directly to the iron prejudice which ruled him, he answered, —

"'Tis none of my affair. The court has tried

him. They have heard witnesses. They have given him a chance to speak. They find him guilty, and condemn him to die, and die he shall, by the Eternal!"

"Then it will be a murder!"

"You dare say that to me?"

"A murder, and on your head it will lie" —

"Silence, or by G—"

"A murder as foul and black as that the other day you committed on those poor savages, the Prophet Francis and Himollemico" —

His face flaming with wrath, the outraged general sprang to his feet, and seizing from the ground beside him his unsheathed sword, advanced as if to strike the offender to the ground.

The least sign of fear or flinching on Zach's part would have been fatal. Instead of avoiding, however, he seemed to court the impending blow. Advancing a step towards his assailant, he met the glance of the furious old man with an unblenched face and an eye as unquailing as his own.

"Strike!" he cried; "strike, I say! Prove that you are a bully and a coward as well as a murderer!"

Beside himself with rage, Jackson threw down his sword and, seizing the taunting youth in his big bony hands, he was about to wreak on him his fury, when, as if charmed in spite of himself by the undaunted look of his victim, he muttered, —

"A Britisher and a liar could n't look like that;" concluding presently, "clear away out of this, and thank your stars I did n't kill ye."

"I'll not budge a step till you give me that man's pardon."

Fairly taken aback by the audacity of his visitor, which stirred at once his wonder and admiration, the general answered in a modified tone, —

"'Tis no business of mine to interfere. The court has tried and sentenced the man — I'll not intermeddle."

"'Tis you that do it — 't is you alone; you cannot shirk the responsibility; the guilt will be on your head."

"The court has found him guilty," persisted the general, but with a show of weakening.

"A court made up of his enemies."

"No matter for that; they were honest, fair-minded men. They had witnesses" —

"What kind of witnesses! One his rival and mortal enemy; the other a rogue of a discharged clerk."

"They had his own letters."

"Why, then, did n't they produce them?"

"Eh?"

"They showed but one; and that proved clear as day that he was innocent."

"Who says this?"

"I say it; and I dare you to read the letter for yourself and say otherwise."

"If they had not all the letters, they had them who had seen them."

"Is this evidence to hang a man? Shame! Shame! It should not hang a dog. Stop this crime! Stay their hands while it is time. Do not let

this murder go on! Send this man back to prison, and I will pledge my life to prove to you his innocence."

Impressed by the earnestness, force, and fearlessness of the petitioner, the general walked apart, and strode up and down in silence. The members of his staff looked in wondering amazement that Zach had not been knocked down at the outset.

"Here, there," shouted the veteran after a little, "give me pen and ink. I may be a fool, but I will inquire into this."

Seating himself again on the log, he took a piece of paper from one of his aides, and began to write.

"As for you, young man," he said, addressing Zach, as he scribbled away, "you shall stay here as security for these fine promises you have made."

Such was the revulsion of feeling caused by this sudden prospect of success in his undertaking, that Zach choked over the thanks which he could not articulate.

"There," cried Jackson, extending a scrap of paper to one of his aides, "take the best horse in camp and carry that to Major Fanning, and don't let the grass grow under your feet."

As the aide took the paper and turned to go, a trampling of horses' hoofs was heard close at hand, and directly several men in uniform emerged from the forest.

"Eh, Fanning, is that you?"

"Ay, sir," with a military salute.

"What are you doing here?"

"I came to report."

"I gave you orders to attend to that business at the fort."

"That is all attended to, sir."

"You mean" — began the general, turning perceptibly pale.

"I mean the executions."

"What!"

"They took place an hour ago."

"By the Eternal!"

CHAPTER XXI.

MAKING a gibbet for the venerable martyr upon his own schooner was quite in keeping with the rest of the business. The ghastly spectacle awaited Zach on his return to St. Marks.

With a grim look he took note of it; with a grim look he went about the duties which lay before him. It was no time for words or tears or futile rage. It was for him to hunt up Jock, — the poor boy had fled horror-stricken to the woods. It was for him to secure a decent burial for his friend, and to carry out to the letter those parting injunctions heard in the prison cell.

It was from the garrulous mate he heard the unwelcome details,—heard that there was seen at least one mourner in deep affliction at the morning's tragedy.

"A queer customer she was, too," concluded the man, wagging his head.

"A woman?"

"Yeah, an' dressed up in London clothes, with a bonnet, and a long veil over her face. I did n't take no notice of her at first, but when the officer give the word, an' they strung the old man up, she clutched a rifle from a soldier, an' it took two or three of 'em to git it away from her, an' when they did, she rushed down to the shore, jumped into a canoe, and paddled across the river."

"Poor girl!" muttered Zach, "it was a reckless thing to show herself here!"

"You know her, boss?"

"Humph, no — yes — that is to say, perhaps."

Zach made all imaginable haste in getting clear of St. Marks. Much to his surprise the authorities discharged the schooner from arrest, and she was suffered to sail away with cargo intact. Jock, incapable of thought or action, depended like a child upon his friend, who, following the trader's directions, proceeded directly to Suwanee, to recover what they might of their belongings. As before, they had a tedious passage up the river. Once under way, Zach left the conduct of the vessel to Jock and the mate. He showed himself at once agitated and preoccupied. He walked the deck for an entire night, wrestling with some mental problem. After these hours of thought he took to writing. By sheer effort of will he held himself down to the uncongenial task. He worked like a blacksmith. In the end he tore up what he had written and began all over again. Thus the voyage passed in grinding toil, and after all, he had nothing to show for it but the mass of white paper scraps with which he showered the surface of the river.

Arrived at the site of the Indian town, they found a scene of desolation. Scarcely a vestige remained of a flourishing community. And the people, the remnant of Bolecks's followers, — the old men, the women and children, — what had become of them? The night hawk that whistled and the screech-owl which hooted about their forsaken hearthstones

could not tell; there was no voice in all the forest to answer.

The trading-station had been included in the ravage, and the spot was now marked only by a heap of blackened ruins.

Here, close under the steep bank, the schooner was anchored on the night of their arrival. Next day the hiding-places across the river where they had buried their treasure were visited, and the contents found intact. Carefully and speedily the rich hoard of skins and merchandise was removed on board the schooner. It was the work of forty-eight hours, more or less. The rest of the crew, making a holiday of the last afternoon, shouldered their rifles and went off in search of game to replenish the ship's larder, leaving Zach behind on guard.

Alone, he betook himself again to his writing. All the long summer afternoon he scribbled and scratched away at his mysterious task, taking no note of the herald-sounds of coming night: the shrill song of the hyla along the river bank, the vesper chirping of the wild birds, and all the countless voices of the woods.

Insensible to all distraction, he clung to his absorbing task until forced to stop by the waning light. Then, getting up, he stretched his arms, rubbed the cramp out of his hands, and lighted his pipe.

Presently, for a bit of exercise, he climbed the bank and wandered about the ruins of the trading-station. Presently, hearing a light sound behind, he turned. There, at the distance of a few yards, — he could scarcely believe his eyes, — stood Malee!

She made no move to approach or speak, on being discovered, but stood silently regarding him.

Although she had lost something of her girlish roundness of outline so perfect a few months before, although the free, joyous confidence of those happy days had given place to a wan, despairing look, he never before so fully realized that, aside from all questions of age or race, she was a beautiful woman. There was now, moreover, a pathetic interest attaching to her, quite in keeping with the hour and place.

"Malee, I am glad to see you," he said, advancing with frank cordiality. "I have been thinking of you, and wondering how everything was going with you these troublous times."

The light grew tender in the girl's eyes; her face took on a look of mute delight like that shown by a dog when caressed by his master, and a flickering smile for a moment played about her lips.

"Malee no friends now; all friends gone. Everything gone."

"No, no," answered Zach, with a sturdy attempt at cheerfulness, "not so bad as that. You've had a hard time lately, I know; we have all had a hard time, but we must wait and hope for better days."

Malee stood unresponsive, with downcast eyes.

"It was bad work they did here, there was bad work done over yonder. It will make loud talk when that war-chief goes home."

"Talk!"

Zach winced at the tone and the sight of the girl's curling lip.

"Will it be so loud to call them back, — him.

and him?" indicating by appropriate gestures her father and Arbuthnot.

"No, they can't give back the dead, and they can never wash out the black guilt of their murder! Never!" repeated Zach, sternly. "It will remain forever a foul blot on the fame of my country!"

Malee did not speak, but stood with half-closed eyes watching the dying glow of the sunset glinting through the leaves.

"Wait, Malee, wait, my poor girl! You have friends among your father's people. You have slaves and cattle and lands."

"No, no, no; all gone, people run away, — cattle killed, — slaves gone. All gone, empty here. Nothing but the voice come back when call."

"Yes, everything looks pretty black now. The echoes are pretty loud; but by and by, by and by, all will be as it used to be."

"You build up again wigwam here?" she asked, with a sudden shrewd look.

"No; *he* left a talk for his son to quit this country and go home."

Malee nodded.

"But other men will come, — red men and white men, — and build a new and better trading-place."

The girl meditated several moments before speaking.

"Old man with snow-head wise. He say to son, 'Go away!' Nobody comes here again. The wild fox and eagle shall have these hunting-grounds of Bolecks and Hillishajo."

"Never fear," broke in Zach, bitterly, and for-

getful, as it seemed, of his purpose of comforting the bereaved girl. "Never fear, it will not be left long to beasts and birds. The white robber will come soon enough, and seize upon it, cut down the trees, drive out the wild fox and eagle as he has driven out the Indian; bring his cattle and swine, build his huts, and leave all as an honest inheritance to his children. The white men, my countrymen, will do this!"

"And the Great Spirit look down and see?"

"The Great Spirit shuts his eyes to a good deal that happens down here."

The girl nodded, with a look half resigned, half cynical, but made no remark.

"But," continued Zach, after a prolonged silence, during which he had explored the whole situation for some safe ground of solace, "your father has many friends in England. They loaded him with gifts and honors when he was there. If, now, they knew of the misfortune of his daughter — Why not write to them? Why not go to them?"

"'T is long way. Out of sight; out beyond sun. I no see. I no send my voice so far. Those good men hear not my cry!"

"Go to them, then! All white men are not like these who have been here. There are white men who know how to tell the truth; who will not bully the weak; who will not strike a man when he is down; who will not steal their neighbor's goods. You have never seen this kind of white man."

"Yes, — *he!*" pointing towards the ruins, "and you."

"I!" Zach blushed at the direct and unexpected tribute. "I don't pretend to much goodness, but I don't lie if I can help it, and I don't steal or assassinate. But" —

He was interrupted by a hallooing far off in the forest. Malee started like a deer.

"'Tis only my friends coming home," he said quietly, pointing towards the schooner. "They have been shooting."

Following the direction of his finger, Malee seemed to note the schooner for the first time. Studying it attentively for several moments, she suddenly turned to him and asked, —

"You go way?"

"Yes, very soon."

"Come back no more?"

"Never."

There was a swallowing movement in the girl's throat, and the mute, despairing appeal in her eyes was heart-moving.

Very obtuse in the matter of facial signs, Zach could not help remarking the changed expression.

"Yes, Malee," he said, taking her hand, "I must bid you good-by. There is nothing to hold me here. There is nothing, God knows, to bring me back. But I shall not forget you. I shall never forget that you saved my life, perhaps more than once. If you are ever in trouble, send to me, and I will do my utmost to help you. The best thing you can do now is to follow your tribe, and join your friends, and when your grief wears itself out, you will be happy again. So once more, good-by. I

hope we shall meet again in happier days for both of us."

The girl tried to speak, but words would not come. Her eyes fell before Zach's direct, earnest gaze, and her hand trembled in his clasp.

The voices of the returning hunters recalled her to herself. With a sudden movement she carried his hand to her forehead, held it for a moment pressed there, and then, without a word or a murmur, fled away into the recesses of the forest.

Zach made a movement as if to recall her, but restrained, perhaps, by the approach of his companions, turned back towards the schooner.

Early next morning they were off. On the way Zach busied himself again with his writing, and stuck to it so persistently that before they arrived at the Gulf he had finished his task.

Thereupon, calling Jock into the cabin, he showed him the result.

It was a memorial to President Monroe upon the Seminole War, setting forth with force and unflinching directness the facts and results of that memorable campaign. The recital was reinforced by divers historical allusions and citations of international law, which were lost upon the attentive listener.

"How are you going to send it?" asked Jock, almost breathless at such audacity.

"I shall find a way," was the confident answer.

"Will it do any good?"

"It will tell them the plain truth, and the whole truth, which they are not like to get from any other

source. The consequences then be on their own heads! I have done all that I can do."

Lost in wonder and admiration, Jock sat by and watched his companion fold and seal the precious instrument. Their further talk was interrupted by a call from the deck.

Going up, they found the mate trying to signal an Indian on shore. The savage stood upon a wooded headland which marks the river bank, and either did not see or would not heed them.

The mate, anxious to question the man upon the state of things in and around the Gulf to which they were hastening, persisted in his signals. At last the savage saw and answered. The *Chance* ran in towards the shore to find anchorage. Zach, seized with a sudden purpose, rushed down again to his writing table and scratched off a hasty note to Malee: —

DEAR FRIEND, — I have found a messenger, and I send you a last word. It is only to say again that I think of you, and that if I can ever help you I will. You can write. You can send me a letter to Nassau. If I am gone, it will come after me.

Good-by again, Malee. Heed my words and put aside your grief! Follow after your father's people! It is not good to live alone. I hope you will have no more trouble. You have had enough. I hope you will have a peaceful and happy life. Remember always that I am your friend.

ZACHARY PHIPS.

CHAPTER XXII.

ARRIVED at the Gulf, the two young traders bethought them what to do. Mindful of Arbuthnot's advice to look first for a market for their goods, they ran across to Pensacola.

Here Jock speedily came to the fore. He showed himself possessed of all his father's shrewdness and tact in trading. In fact, it was at once evident that he was not only born to the business, but so clearly superior to his companion in this respect that Zach, recognizing his own incompetence, stood by staring helplessly at his junior's masterful management.

In the end he took the better part of leaving the whole business in Jock's hands, and so, having of a morning rendered what help he could in a super-numerary way, he thrust his hands in his pockets and went whistling off along the docks.

It was when upon one of these lounging expeditions among the shipping that his attention was one day drawn to a quarrel going on amongst a group of sailors. The matter presently came to blows, and was fast developing into a serious affray, when it was effectually settled by a brawny peace-maker who, thrusting himself between the fiercest of the disputants, forced them apart.

The action of the mediator awoke certain reminiscences in the idle looker-on. He studied the man

attentively. A look of recognition suddenly shone in his face, and, lounging carelessly up to the stranger, he spoke to him.

"Goin' to be a storm?"

"Reckon not."

"You 're a sailor?"

"Yeah," with a casual glance at the questioner.

"Belong to one of these vessels?"

"Thet schooner yender!" with a wave of his pipe.

"From New Orleans?"

"Yeah."

"Followed the sea a good many years?"

"Pooty much all my life."

"Rather different down here from Kennebunkport."

The sailor studied the inquisitive stranger askance before answering.

"I s'pose it's my Down-East twang makes ye guess I'm from Maine."

"Perhaps; but you have had some river experience, too!"

"How so?"

"On the Mississippi."

"Eh? You don't mean to say you was in that Washita business?" The sailor regarded his questioner more narrowly. "I don't seem to remember you."

"And then Lake Pontchartrain."

The man looked hopelessly puzzled as he muttered, "Yeah, out there to Falconer's. But who be you, stranger, anyway?"

"What ever became of the boy you had with you?"

"Wall, now, mister, whoever ye be, ef ye 'd tell me thet, ye 'd be doin' me the tallest kind of a favor."

"You have lost track of him, then?"

"I 'm drefful 'fraid I hev. Ye see, 't was like this: I take it you 're a friend o' his'n, an' I 'll jest — wall, the fact o' the matter is, I hed n't no business to 'a' gone off the way I did. But, ye see, 't was all-fired slow business for me, foolin' round in thet pond in a sailboat. I stood it jest as long as I could, an' then I swung loose. Bub wanted to go, but I told him he 'd better hold hard to his anchor till I turned up agin. He kind o' seemed to agree. But when, after a spell, I got round there agin, he 'd jest cut stick, an' I did n't blame him, nuther."

"He ran away, then?"

"Wall, I s'pose so, 'n' I was cut up pooty bad, for I 'd got mighty fond o' Bub in my way, an' he was as likely a little cuss as ever I see."

"Then you don't know what became of him?"

"Wall, no, I don't. I heerd say he went into the war, 'n' I should n't wonder 'f he did, for he was allers chock full o' fight."

"How old would he be by this time, if he was alive?"

"Man's size, I s'pose, though I can't seem to think on him 'cept as a little shaver."

"Should you know him again?"

"The minit I sot eyes on him."

"He must have changed a good deal in all this time."

"Yeah, but ther 's most allers sunthin' thet don't change. Oh, I should know him fast enough."

"Any mark about him to swear by?"

"Wall, he hed, but I should n't need no mark to make *him* out."

"What kind of a mark did he have?"

"One ther was n't no danger o' his losin': I tattooed the stars an' stripes on one o' his arms jest to please him one day, an'"—

"Was it anything like this?" and the questioner pulled up his sleeve.

"God A'mighty! — you — Bub! ye don't mean it! ye don't mean it!"

Staring with might and main, the sailor got up and, taking off Zach's hat, stood back and gazed at him with wonder and delight.

"Wall, I swear! 'Tain't possible. I 'm losin' my faculties. The idee o' your talkin' to me all this time, an' I not knowin'."

"But you know me now, eh?" cried Zach, clasping the horny hand in his own.

"Know ye! I dunno. I won't swear to anythin' no longer. Gorry, it beats everythin' all holler, the way ye hev changed!"

"How so?"

"Wall, I dunno. I dunno as I can describe it. It's a kind o' eddicated look."

"I hope that has n't spoiled me."

"No, no-o," repeated Sandy reflectively, "you've turned out a good deal harnsomer man 'n' I ever

thought ye 'd be. Ye warn't no great to look at when ye was a little shaver."

Zach laughed.

"But where ye ben, an' what ye ben doin' of? Ye ain't follerin' the sea no longer, I reckon?"

Zach good-naturedly told his story, which was listened to with open-mouthed interest. When he came to describe the visit to Boston, to his great surprise, Sandy suddenly jumped up and strode off towards the schooner without a word.

After an absence of fully five minutes, he came back muttering, —

"I sh'd never 'a' thought of it agin ef you hed n't happened to say 'Boston.' I 've hed it quite a spell now, an' tucked it away under my things so 't should n't git lost, an' jest forgot all about it. Wall, never mind, ther's no harm done. Here ye be, at last, an' here 't is for ye to read!"

Saying these words he handed Zach an old and somewhat crumpled newspaper, and pointed with his bronzed forefinger to the following passage: —

"Information is wanted of the whereabouts of Zachary Phips, son of Obadiah Phips, late of this town and commonwealth, deceased. When last heard from, he had enlisted on board the United States frigate Chesapeake, and it is supposed he was among the survivors of her crew taken by the *Shannon* to Halifax. Communicate with Mrs. Obadiah Phips, Boston, Mass."

Although this sudden news of his father's death was a shock to Zach, it was not accompanied by any deep feeling of grief, or sense of personal be-

reavement. His father had never been a companion to him; he had hardly seemed a friend. Thus the only permanent effect of the announcement was a vague feeling of loneliness attendant upon the thought that the only human being who had cared for him in the place of his birth was gone.

He remained silent for several minutes after reading the item, grinding his boot-heel into the moist sand and trying to realize the effect of the affliction on the family in Salutation Alley. Presently he picked up the newspaper, looked at the date, and slowly read the passage again.

"I suppose it's on account of the property," he said at last, falling unconsciously into his old confidential tone with Sandy.

"Was he wuth consid'ble?" asked Sandy, with the New England instinct.

"No, oh, no-o; nothing to speak of. Yet," he concluded, with a little hardening of the eye and compression of the lips, "whatever he did leave, I s'pose I've a right to my share."

"Yes; an' yer step-marm can't divide things up tell they know what's become of ye, — thet's whar the shoe pinches; 't was her put that in."

"I suppose so."

"She won't die o' disapp'intment, Bub, ef ye don't turn up at all."

"Why should I disappoint her by turnin' up? Let her keep what there is! There'll be hardly a bite apiece for her and her chicks."

"Wall, now, Bub, look here!" said Sandy, cutting up a charge for his pipe and assuming his old part

of mentor, "thet 's all pooty talk enough, but don't you never do nothin' in the dark! Find out what ye got, 'fore ye go givin' on 't away!"

"You're wasting sound wisdom on this case, skipper; there's nothing in it worth talking or thinking of, I assure you."

"Ye dunno, ye dunno nothin' 'bout it. Mebbe the old man hed laid up a little sunthin', an' ef he has, take my advice an' hang on to your share on 't. For it's ben my experience," continued Sandy, lighting his well-packed pipe, "that a little penny extry comes in mighty handy now an' then, an' nobody knows the day when he's agoin' to get shipwrecked or cast away; an' the' ain't no better friend in sech a case than a wad in yer stockin' heel."

"Guess you're 'bout right, skipper," said Zach absently.

"Wall, I be, Bub, ef I do say it. It's all wall enough to lean on the Lord an' yer neighbors when ye ain't got no other backboard, but for gittin' out of a real scrape, giv' *me* a han'ful of hard dollars! So, my advice to you is, git up there an' see how things be; the old man may 'a' made a will."

Zach listened to this advice all the more readily that it jibed so completely with certain of his own recent theories. Taking a suggestion from the skipper's words, he went on making out a mental balance sheet of his belongings, and became not a little interested and excited at the probable sum total. First, there was his share of the peltry due him from Arbuthnot's estate on account of wages. Next the money he had given his father to invest, which he

had well-nigh forgotten. Then there was prize-money still due him from the Government on account of the vessel which Burr had libeled. And lastly, here was this windfall of a few dollars from his father.

The array of items was impressive, and he already felt a stirring of greed within him, — a new sensation.

While absorbed in these exciting calculations he was conscious that Sandy had been talking, and now tardily awoke to the fact that the skipper had been giving him an account of his experiences since they parted.

“And so you are still before the mast?” broke in Zach at last, with a show of interest.

“Not jest exactly.”

“You are mate, then?”

“I used ter be.”

“What! you don’t mean to say that you’re a captain?” cried Zach incredulously.

“Wall, why not?” asked Sandy, with a shame-faced look.

“Nothing — a — of course, only I” —

“Only ye didn’t ever ’spect I’d turn out anythin’. Wall, Bub, nuther did I; but ye see, I hed a streak o’ luck durin’ the war. I got out the fust big load o’ cotton that sailed out er Noo Orleans arter the proclamation, ’n’ I made a little heap out on ’t. Then a fit took me. I know’d ther would n’t be a continental cent o’ that money left inside a fortnit ef ’t stayed in my britches, an’ ’t jest happened so ’t haaf this schooner was for sale,

an' I up an' bought it, an' — oh, wall, 't ain't nothin' ter speak of, anyway. I" —

"So," interrupted Zach, in unmeasured astonishment, "you're not only a skipper but a ship-owner to boot?"

"Wall, 'f ye like ter put it thet way," said Sandy, scratching his head awkwardly for by-play, "I s'pose I be."

Zach was suddenly seized with an idea.

"You can go where you like, then?"

"I don't see nothin' ter hender."

"And when you like?"

"Ginerally speakin'."

"At present you are going back to New Orleans?"

"Soon ez I git loaded."

"I'll go with you."

"The devil ye will! Wall, now, thet'll be — I vum, thet'll seem kind o' like old times!"

"I can take along my skins," continued Zach, talking, as it seemed, to himself, "and ship them to London as well from New Orleans as from Nassau, and, in fact, much better. I have nothing to take me back there, why should I go?" He continued his speculations mentally, as he paced up and down among the litter of freight on the dock.

"Wall, wall, wall," continued Sandy, still revolving the good news. "Who'd 'a' thought! The idee o' findin' of ye here, when I ben on the look-out all these years, an' hed jest about gin it up as a bad bargain!"

Zach, still busy with his private speculations, did not answer.

"Shouldn't wonder ef we could git off to-mor-rer, the way things look now," continued Sandy, with a glance over at the schooner. "When can ye come aboard?"

"Humph, I don't know. I'm afraid I was a little hasty about that. I didn't think what I was saying. It begins to look as if I should have to go to Nassau after all."

The skipper's face fell, and he did not speak for several minutes.

"Wall, now, Bub," he began presently, with a look of dejection, "I kind o' wish I hedn't met ye; it's my luck all over. I might 'a' know'd what to expect. I went on like a fool an' got things all planned out. But this ere knocks the bottom right out o' everythin'!"

"Eh? How is that?" asked Zach, awaking to his friend's disappointment.

"Why, ye'd got this ere business in Boston to 'tend to, an' there's no two ways about it, you'd oughter go; an' I thought as I'd jest agreed with that Frenchman"—

"Monsieur?"

"The little lawyer 't used ter come out to the lake. Wall, seein' as I'd kind o' agreed to take him up ter the Chesapeake when he goes to Washington"—

"Eh? He is going to Washington?"

"Yeah, on this business o' Falconer's."

"What business?" with awakening interest.

"'Bout the damage done ter the plantation. 'Twas pooty d—d nigh spilt, that prop'ty—I

never see sech a sight. Wall, the little lawyer he 's ben at it two or three years 'thout doin' much. Now he 's startin' in agin, sence Falconer was here."

"When was that?" was the eager question.

"Two or three months ago, I sh'd think; I don't jest remember. But they didn't stay long. It made 'em kind o' homesick, I guess, so he 'n' the little gal went off ter London an' left" —

"Sylvia, — was she here?"

"Yeah, she was; an' she 's grow'd to look harnsome as a picter, jest like" —

"How do you know they went to London?" interrupted the listener again.

"It must 'a' ben the lawyer 't told me, 'n' he said he reckoned they 'd gone for good this time. Ye see I got pooty wall acquainted with the Square, 'cause he draw'd the docyments fer me when I bought the schooner."

"Sandy," said Zach, suddenly stopping in his walk, "I 've changed my mind again."

"Ye don't say!"

"I 've concluded to go with you, after all."

"Hooray. Wall, a weather-cock 's a fool to you, Bub, for gittin' round; but ye're pintin' in the right direction this time, an' it means fair weather, an' no squalls, or I 'm mistaken."

"And now," said Zach, making a move to go, "I will be with you again as soon as possible. I have to settle up affairs with young Mr. Arbuthnot; but it cannot take us long, and so far as I am concerned, we may be off to-morrow."

Zach had, in effect, no difficulty in making an

amicable settlement with Jock, who, however reluctant to part with him, could offer no reasonable objection to his going. Whereupon, a balance having been struck, Zach had his skins conveyed on board the "Malviny," — Sandy's schooner, — and bade a reluctant adieu to the Chance and her owner.

Moved by a sudden impulse, at the last moment he called back to Jock, —

"Send all letters for me to Boston!"

The "Malviny" got away the same afternoon, and her skipper, as was only too evident, could hardly contain himself for joy. He was heard several times unmistakably singing to himself, and on some slight and quite inadequate occasion burst into a loud guffaw, which startled the entire crew.

By degrees he grew composed, and when they were fairly out of sight of land, settled himself on deck with a freshly-lighted pipe and astonished his passenger by saying, —

"As I was tellin' ye, — ye 'member, when we got interrupted t' other day, — I'd agreed to take the little Square up to the Chesapeake" —

"Yes," said Zach, idly wondering what was coming.

"Wall, I was a-thinkin' that as ye'd got this business up north, an' we sh'd be haaf-way up anyway, I'd better jest take on a load o' cotton an' run up to Boston 'n' done with it."

Zach stared, as well he might. He had the air of having quite forgotten Boston and his errand in that town.

"Could you make the trip pay?"

"No trouble 'bout that. Cotton is ez good ez gold, an' the Yankees never git enough on 't."

Zach loaded his own pipe and pondered the matter.

"You are going to take Monsieur in any case?"

"Yeah."

"And the Chesapeake is half-way up?"

"Thereabouts."

"What could you get for a return cargo?"

"Oh, the Yankees make a million o' things thet we want, — boots an' shoes, clo'es, tools, machinery, dry goods, — never you fear 'bout thet."

"Well, Sandy, if you 're willing to take the risk, I don't see as I can do any better than go with you."

"Jest what I thought," said the skipper, and thereupon burst into another guffaw, so quite inappropriate, as it seemed, to anything that had been said, that Zach looked at him with a momentary misgiving.

Within a fortnight, accordingly, the "Malviny" sailed out of the port of New Orleans on her way northward.

Zach gladly availed himself of the opportunity to renew his acquaintance with Monsieur, and enjoyed to the full the little lawyer's amazement at the change which had taken place in his old pupil. In the course of their many conversations he related in part his experiences, and making known the nature of his present errand to Boston, failed not to take the advice of the little attorney upon his rights and obligations.

But Zach had, it appears, another purpose with regard to Monsieur, for, on parting with his old friend at the mouth of the Potomac, he brought forth his memorial, and without any unnecessary explanation as to its subject-matter, begged him to see that it was safely delivered. At a time when a large part of the mail-matter was carried by private hand, Monsieur found nothing unusual in the request, and readily undertook the commission.

Thence northward the voyage was without event. The "Malviny" duly and safely arrived in Boston, where Sandy, on landing his passenger, charged him to still consider the schooner his headquarters.

For reasons of his own, Zach's first care was to visit a tailor, and it was not until after a week's delay, and then in a suit of fresh mourning, with immaculate linen, hat, and shoes, that he wended his way to Salutation Alley.

He found his former home deserted, and on the door a staring placard saying, —

"To Let."

CHAPTER XXIII.

TURNING away from the door of his old home in Salutation Alley with a baffled feeling, Zach mechanically wandered around to the malthouse. Prepared now for changes, he was nevertheless shocked at the state of things there. The old building was not only empty and disused, but in a tumble-down condition. The ridge-pole had slumped, the chimneys looked like incoherent heaps of brick, the clapboards were loose and flapping, the front steps had fallen, the window-panes were broken, while the spacious yard was strewn with a litter of old casks, boards, and rusty kettles, interspersed with a riotous crop of plantain and wormwood.

It was a dismal spectacle, and filled the beholder with an intolerable feeling of homesickness. For here had centred his dearest remembrances, here, escaped from his step-mother's oversight, his happiest childhood's hours had been passed.

Hurrying away, he took the nearest turn and came into Hanover Street. With no thought of his course, he wandered on towards the water-side, reviving boyish recollections at every step.

Coming to the Methodist meeting-house he noted that the windows were open, and that there was a sound of somebody moving within. Directly, it occurred to him that here he might perhaps learn the

whereabouts of Mrs. Becky, who had been so long a communicant of the society.

He went in. Here, at least, everything was unchanged. The square-edged mahogany pulpit, the bare white walls, the Gothic peaks in which the tall green window-blinds ended, the unmitigated white parallelogram of a ceiling with the same old water-stain in the right-hand corner, which in boyish fancy he used to resolve into pictures of wild-beasts fighting, or a shipwreck at sea, — how many weary times he had studied these loathed details during the hours of his forced attendance in the days gone by?

He found the sexton — a commonplace young man — dusting the pews. He was disappointed that it was not the old official whose severe eye had filled him with such awe when a boy. Unconsciously he had been thirsting for years for an opportunity of bullying that once-dreaded functionary and squaring the old account.

Inquiring for Mrs. Becky, he heard to his astonishment that the family had long since moved to a farm in a neighboring town, where Mr. Phips had ended his days.

Getting precise directions, Zach went to the nearest tavern, hired a horse and wagon, and set off in search of his step-mother. Mrs. Becky's residence, long since taken in and swallowed up by the spreading metropolis of to-day, was then in the wide, wild country. Zach duly rolled up to the door, after an hour's drive through a pleasant winding turnpike.

A new set of surprises awaited him, beside which those of the morning seemed second-rate. First

and foremost there was the spacious house, almost manorial in appearance, the comfortable barns and outhouses, and the air of thrift prevailing. Going in, his wonder grew, for the large rooms, although plainly furnished, seemed sumptuous beside the bare and pinched interior of Salutation Alley.

A young woman received him whom he did not recognize, presumably one of his half-sisters.

Mrs. Becky kept him waiting for a full quarter of an hour. She had chosen for some reason to make a toilet, and appeared in a black gown and weeds. His first impression was that she had aged a good deal. Her thin hair was brushed tightly away under her cap, her skin had withered, the lines in her face had deepened, and the old-time expression of rectitude had become confirmed. Withal her whole bearing suggested an attitude towards the world of disapproving sufferance.

Offering her chill and bony palm to Zach, she said in a tone conscientiously meant to be friendly, —
“I did n’t know ’s we ’d ever see ye agin.”

Finding nothing appropriate to say to this, Zach cleared his throat and resumed his seat.

“I did kind o’ hope ye might come home ’fore yer father died. He set a good deal by ye, for all” — Mrs. Becky hesitated for a word — “the way things has gone, an’ he spoke of ye two or three times towards the last, — seemed to hev ye on his mind. ’T was nateral, I s’pose, bein’ as things hev been, you away from home so, an’ no knowin’ where you was, or whether or no ye ’d ever come back.”

“How long has he been dead?” asked Zach with

the intent of giving the talk a turn rather than a change.

"He passed away in December — the 5th of December, 'bout half past three in the mornin'. I was with him, an' when I see the change a-comin' I stepped to the door an' called the children. One of the neighbors was settin' up with him that night, an' he helped to lay him out."

"How long was he sick?"

"Wall, he was what ye might call breakin' up for three months more or less. He's never ben jest the same sence he giv' up business, but he did n't seem to suffer no gret, though it come pooty sudden at the last."

"Did he leave any word or message for me?"

"No, I dunno 's he did, beyond, as I said, mentionin' yer name. I don't seem to remember anythin' pertickler. He war n't sure, an' we never hev ben, 't you was alive, for one thing, an' then I dunno as he hed anythin' pertickler to say; he war n't no gret of a talker anyway."

"How long since he gave up business?"

"In the neighborhood o' two years, I should say; it might be more; my memory ain't what it was."

"You have moved?"

"Yis — a — ahem — we hev" — the sentence concluded as if bitten off to cut short some comment on the tongue.

"It's rather strange father should have taken up farming so late in life."

"Wall, 't war n't exactly matter-of-choice. He traded for the farm, an' hed it on his hands, an' —

the long an' short of it is 't was cheaper livin' out here, an' gin us more room; so on the whole it seemed the best thing to do."

There was a pause. Either Zach's curiosity was satisfied, or he felt an embarrassment about going on. Both evidently realized that the serious part of their interview was to come. Mrs. Becky folded a hem in the edge of her already nicely-hemmed apron and basted it with an imaginary needle, while Zach followed with his toe a red strand in the braided rag-mat.

"D ye see the notice I put in the paper?" asked Mrs. Becky at last, taking the bull by the horns.

"It was shown to me."

"I did n't hev no gret faith in it, but they told me to do it, and so I did. You can't ever tell, these days, how a thing'll turn out. Ye come home a purpose, I s'pose?"

"Mainly; though I had a good chance to come, or perhaps I should n't."

"Wall, 't was right you should know, an' it's the law, besides, so Square Thompson says, an' I b'lieve in hevin' things settled, so 't they'll stay settled."

"Square Thompson told you to advertise, then."

"Yis."

"He's attending to the business, I suppose."

"Yis, he is."

"Did father — er" — the sentence was broken by an embarrassed little cough — "make a will?"

"Wall, yis, he did. We did n't any on us know nothin' 'bout it, though, tell afterwards. Obadiah

was a close man. A gret deal closer than *I*'d any idee of. He kept things to himself. Nobody ever know'd anythin' 'bout his business 's long as he lived. He had a way o' pertendin' not to hear ef ye ast any questions, an' for my part I allers s'posed we was poor as Job's turkey."

Mrs. Becky smoothed out her puckered apron with an impatient sweep of her hand, and her tone acquired a touch of acerbity as she proceeded.

"Folks has their failin's, an' we hev to take 'em as we find 'em. We all hev enough to answer for in the long run; but 's my way to hev everythin' open an' aboveboard as I go along, an' so ther won't be nothin' to come out at the end. They say 't ye oughtn't to say anythin' agin them 't hes passed away, but I don't think Obadiah done right, an' I never shall; an' 't ain't no wuss to say it than 't is to think it. I should 'a' managed a good deal diff'rent ef I'd know'd how things was gon' to turn out."

Noting the growing look of curiosity in her listener's face, Mrs. Becky hastened to add, —

"I don't mean to say 't he hes left any gret, anyway, but he'd allers talked so discouragin' thet I'd made up my mind thet 't would be nip an' tuck ef we did n't hev to go on the town."

"I am glad if he has left you comfortable."

"Th' ain't nobody any gladder 'n' I be. The laborer's worthy o' his hire, an' I done my share o' hard work ever sence I took hold. I don't want ye to think, though, 't 'mounts to sech an awful sight, seein' as there's five on us to parcel it up, 'thout countin' in you."

Mingled with his growing curiosity Zach was conscious of another feeling in connection with the matter under discussion, which he could not analyze.

Turning a watchful eye upon her visitor, Mrs. Becky proceeded, but with a marked hesitation.

"Ef what he left ain't divided up as — well, as some on us might 'a' liked, all I can say is, he did it himself, an' he did as he thought right, I s'pose. 'T any rate," she concluded, in a tone as it seemed almost defiant, which jarred upon her listener's ear, "he never hed no hints from me, nor any o' my family. A man never does make a will to suit other folks, I s'pose."

Busy with speculations over the significance of some of Mrs. Becky's tones and inflections, Zach did not answer.

"You ain't merried, be ye?" demanded his step-mother, after a pause.

Zach shook his head.

"Oh, there, I most forgot. I knew ther was sumthin'." She rose, went into the hall, and came back with a stout walking-stick having a gnarled root handle.

"There," she said, handing it to Zach, "he used thet a sight. I ben a-keepin' it. Thought ye might like it for a keepsake. He didn't leave much o' anythin' o' thet sort wuth givin' away."

Zach took the cane and got up to go.

"You ain't a-goin'?" Why, I — er — ther's another thing I wanted to say. Set down a minute! I — er" — The widow cleared her throat, and braced herself as if against any recurring qualms or hesitation.

"It's 'bout the business: I s'pose the sooner thet's 'tended to the better."

Zach nodded.

"I dunno as I told ye. I'm appointed the executrix in the will, but thet don't make no odds; it don't make me responsible for what's in it. All I got to do is to carry it out jest as it's sot down. As long as I hed n't nothin' to do with makin' it, I hain't got no apologies to make for what's in it."

The indefinable feeling which Zach had found difficulty, a few minutes before, in analyzing, now developed into a very positive and uncomfortable misgiving.

"Square Thompson drawed the will," went on Mrs. Becky, "an' he's got a copy on it. He used to be *his* lawyer, p'rhaps you remember?"

Zach shook his head.

"Wall, he did; an' as I say, he drawed the will, an' ef anybody knows anythin' 'bout Obadiah's reasons for makin' it, he doos. So 't, for all I can see, the best thing for you to do is to go to the Square's office in town, tell him who ye be, an' he'll gin it to ye to read, an' tell ye anythin' ye want to know."

Rising again to go, Zach received a halting offer of hospitality, which he thought proper to decline.

The interview on the whole proved so fruitful of suggestions and impressions that he never knew how he got home, and only fairly awoke to things about him when, settled with his pipe on board the "Malviny," he was called to give an account of himself by the impatient Sandy.

“Wall, Bub, what kind o’ a tussle ’d ye hev with yer step-marm? Is the old lady as up-an’-a-comin’ as she used to be?”

Next day Zach went to see Squire Thompson. Having learned the name and business of his visitor, the wrinkled old attorney eyed him with a truly provincial curiosity, while, having brought out a dusty black box studded with tarnished brass nails, he fumbled among its contents for Obadiah Phips’s last will and testament.

Having at last received the document, Zach seated himself at the window with averted face to read it. As he eagerly scanned page after page, written in Squire Thompson’s clear but crabbed hand, his wonder grew apace. At last the real Obadiah Phips stood revealed. Clearly now it appeared that the henpecked little maltster had led a life of his own, — a life within a life, enriched by unsuspected passions, enjoyments, resources. Mrs. Becky had been suffered to rule the roast in Salutation Alley, — a sordid, contemptible little roast, — without let or hindrance, while her triumphant spouse rolled up his golden hoard and hugged to his heart the consciousness of growing power. The petty tyranny of his hearthstone was richly atoned for by hours of bliss spent at the dingy little desk in the cobwebby corner of the malthouse.

Mrs. Becky’s undertone of irritation in speaking of the defunct now became explicable. She could not forgive having been left out of the secret. She could not forgive Obadiah’s posthumous triumph.

In his amazement at the record of farms, wood-

lots, shops, houses, mortgages, and notes of hand, the reader at first took no note of their disposition. Only when nearing the end it suddenly came over him that his own name had not once occurred; that it was to the widow and her children all these chattels real and personal had been bequeathed.

In a sudden fever of excitement he went back to the beginning and reviewed page by page what he had read. There was no mistake; the eldest son was nowhere mentioned.

Hereupon, with a new and ominous significance, other words and intonations of Mrs. Becky came to mind. Was this, then, another unsuspected trait of the old maltster? And was it indeed unprompted, this deadly, long-nourished resentment? Had the unforgiving father, wholly of his own notion, waited all these weary years to mete out punishment to his eldest born for a childish peccadillo?

Stay! The reader feels a thrill, and the perspiration starts out on his forehead. Here at last is his name in the final clause!

“To my eldest son, Zachary Phips, son of my deceased wife, Susannah Shrimpton, if he be alive at the time of my death, I give and bequeath the property known as the Malthouse, meaning hereby to include both the land and the buildings. In case, however, my said son, now absent in foreign parts, fails to come back, or nothing is heard of him for ten years after my decease, then the said property shall be sold for the benefit of my estate.”

The hot blood surged to Zach's head. A sickening feeling of mortification and disappointment un-

nerved him. He read the clause again and again. Could he trust his eyes? Against all those sounding bequests to Mrs. Becky and her brood was this tumble-down old building and its patch of land alone set aside as the portion of his first-born!

Peering through the dusty window-panes, he sat for a long time pondering the matter. A movement of Squire Thompson's recalled him to himself. He picked up the will, which had fallen to the floor, and carefully re-read it. Coming to the last page he paused. Like a flash of light a new thought came into his head. Clear as a picture his father's image came back to him, and as he gazed at the well-remembered features, one of the shrewd gray eyes gleaming forth from between the lines of that final clause seemed distinctly and knowingly to wink at him.

CHAPTER XXIV.

WITH his mind divided between doubt and a new electrifying hope, Zach felt an instant need of talking the whole matter over with Sandy.

The skipper was the most comfortable of counselors. Safe as the tomb as a repository of confidences, he was, besides, not only interested and sympathetic, but sometimes struck out from his own peculiar standpoint very shrewd and wholesome advice. For the rest, his talk and his presence were often frankly disregarded, and he served, a priceless office in a confidant, as a convenient pretext for thinking aloud.

Arrived on board the "Malviny," Zach was told that the skipper was in the cabin busied with his accounts. Unwilling to interrupt so serious a business, he lighted his pipe and sat down on the deck.

After a long time Sandy appeared. He wore a look almost haggard. Accounts always tried him to the verge of desperation. The crew had learned to take note of these occasions, and usually kept out of his way for a time afterwards.

He came upon deck venting phrases of incoherent and ungrammatical profanity.

"What's the matter?" asked Zach, with studied coolness.

"They ben at it agin."

"What?"

"Cheatin' me."

"Who?"

"They're a set o' thievin' land-lubbers! Th' ain't no sech thing as honesty ashore anyw'ers. If a man's born honest, the dry land seems to kind o' suck it out o' him."

"What's happened?"

"Jest run yer eye over thet an' ye'll see!" handing a paper. "I done thet sum, an' I done it over an' over agin, an' though it doos come different evry time, it don't come *their way* none o' the time."

"Who are they?"

"Our cons'nees; a set o' blood-suckin' Jews, thet's who they be, an' I say it though I'm a Yankee myself."

Zach took the paper good-naturedly, went over the figures, and broke out laughing.

"Wall, what now?"

"It's clear enough."

"Ah-h, thet's what I thought."

"It's your mistake."

"Eh?"

"You've added in the year-of-our-Lord to the dollars."

"Heigh! — *I* did?"

"Yes."

"Wall, they say figgers don't lie, but I think they're the lyin'est things I ever hed anythin' to do with. I'd agree to git through life, an' git through fair square 'n' aboveboard, 'thout nary cipher in

it — but let it go! let it go! I'd ruther 't be so than hev 'em cheatin'! When 'd ye git back?"

"An hour ago."

"Ben to see the lawyer?"

"Yes."

"What 'd he say?"

"Very little."

"Then he ain't like the rest on 'em. 'D he show ye th' old man's last will and testament?"

"Yes."

"Wall, ye war n't left out, I guess?"

"Not quite."

"Eh? Ye don't say he cut ye off with a shillin'? Hm-m! Thet 's what I was 'fraid of. Wall, now, Bub, thet 's yer step-marm's doin's!"

Zach cleared his throat and did not answer.

"It 's the old woman's doin's, clear as glass. I don't mean ter say she writ the will, but she put it inter the old man's head."

"I don't know."

Busied with thoughts which, for some reason, he chose not to make known yet to his companion, Zach gave only a lukewarm assent to the skipper's indignant charge.

"So he cut ye off, eh?"

"No; he left me a hundred dollars in money" —

"A hundred! — hm-m! 'T ain't no fortune, but it might bury ye at a pinch."

"And the old malthouse property."

"What 's thet wuth?"

"I don't know; but if you 're through ciphering, we 'll go ashore after dinner and look at it."

"So we will. It may be better 'n' nothin', but I hain't no gret faith in dry land. Then agin, with thet old woman a-watchin' an' a-grabbin' around, th' ain't no gret danger ye 've got much of a plum."

After a midday dinner aboard, the two went ashore and, sauntering around through Dock Square, came to the malthouse.

"Yeah, hm-m!" muttered Sandy, ejecting a mouthful of tobacco juice, and drying his lips on the back of his hand. "Wall, Bub, ef ye want to know *my* opinion o' thet, I wouldn't take it for a gift!"

Busy with his own speculations, Zach made no remark.

"More 'n thet," continued the skipper, with rising indignation, "I'd make a present on 't to the old woman, an' tell her thet s' long's she's got the run o' the sty, she can jest git inter the trough an' suzzle round."

The satire fell on deaf ears. Zach, with calculating eyes, was measuring the space covered by the outhouses and pigpens which, straggling downward towards the dock, disguised the very spacious dimensions of the lot.

"'Less ye wanted to go inter raisin' hogs fer a livin'," continued Sandy, "I don't see as ye can do anythin' with the land, an' as fer the buildin's, the best thing is to set fire to 'em 'fore they drop."

"Humph! I don't know, skipper. You could never tell what father meant by anything he said or did; and I've been thinking perhaps he's not done a bad thing by me."

The skipper whistled incredulously and took a fresh quid.

"Do you see how all the business is crowding down to this end of the town?"

"Hm-m-m!"

"Do you see all those big stores and warehouses in State Street?"

"Wall?"

"Do you see how fast it is building up over there on the other side of the market?"

"What of it?"

"Don't you notice how the building fever is beginning to creep around to this side? Look at that row on the corner."

"Wall, Bub, now ye pint it out, it doos seem as ef 't was sunthin' spreadin', like the measles or varyloid, but" —

"Just notice, too," continued Zach, with kindling eye, "that all these new buildings are shops and stores and warehouses, and that every one of them is occupied."

"Yeah, yeah, I do," answered the reluctant skipper.

"Well, now, Sandy, I'm beginning to think my father knew what he was about" —

"Ye don't say!"

"Knew that he was giving me the most valuable piece of real estate he had, and that he meant to do it."

Sandy screwed up his eyes and refrained for some minutes from any comment, walking about the premises, trampling down the weeds, and kicking the old

kettles with a dejected air. At last, conscious that some comment was expected of him, he cleared his mouth and said, —

“It may be as you say. I don’t say ’t ain’t. You know’d the old man, an’ you’re the best jedge. Ef, as you’ve ben a-tellin’, he outwitted the old woman all his life, ’t ain’t onlikely he may ’a’ played this ere caper arter he was dead. All the same, Bub, ef ye want my mind, I’m free to say, I don’t begredge ye this ramshackle old place one mite.”

So far from being disconcerted by this very positive opinion, the devisee walked back to the wharf where their boat was waiting with an air of elation, stopping at the first painter’s shop on the way to order a large board painted with the legend, —

FOR SALE OR TO LET.

INQUIRE OF THE POSTMASTER.

Meantime a purpose had been forming in Zach’s mind, which next day, in one of his talking-aloud moods, he laid before the skipper, much to that worthy’s surprise.

“I’ve been thinking of those skins of mine.”

“’Feard the moths ’ll git at ’em?”

“No, but how I’m to get rid of ’em.”

“Wall, take yer time; th’ won’t be no storage charges while they’re on board the *Malviny*.”

“But there’s the risk of fire, and then it’s high time I was getting my money out of ’em.”

“So it is; ye’re right. Why don’t ye try an’ trade ’em off here in town?”

Zach shook his head.

"Eh? Why not?"

"London 's the only market."

"The cost o' sendin' on 'em over 'd eat up most o' the profit, I reckon."

"Yes, so I 'm thinking of taking them myself."

"Sho!"

"I could do better with them myself than another, and have a chance to see a bit of the world besides."

"Yeah," said Sandy doubtfully, "ef ye understood the language."

"Language! why 't is English!"

"Wall, they call it English, but an out-an'-out Frenchman is a mightier sight easier ter understand. I never pertend to ketch more 'n one word in ten when a Johnny Bull talks. He mumbles his words round in his jaw like a bite o' hot hasty pudding, and generally swallers more 'n half he oughter spit out."

Several hours afterwards the skipper came to Zach as he was sitting in the stern sheets, and mumbled with an embarrassed air, —

"I did n't say nothin' 'bout it afore, — I s'pose you thought 't was queer, — but, fact is, I did n't see how I could do it, an' I wanted to think it over."

"What?" asked Zach, innocently.

"Ye see, she ain't rigged for it."

"Rigged for what?"

"Takin' on ye across the pond."

"Who ain't?"

"The Malviny."

Next morning, Zach found in his mail a formidable-looking official document. Breaking the seal, he read as follows:—

WASHINGTON, D. C.,
EXECUTIVE MANSION, *July 10, 1818.*

TO ZACHARY PHIPS, ESQ.

Sir, — Your communication upon the Seminole War has been received and considered, and His Excellency, the President, desires me to say that your presence is desired here at your earliest convenience with a view to a fuller discussion of its contents.

Your obedient servant,

J—— M——N,
Private Sec'y.

To say that Zach was much moved by this summons is to speak within bounds. Evidently he had looked for no such result from his memorial. After mulling over the matter for a while, he took Sandy into his counsel. The skipper promptly expressed his opinion.

“Th’ ain’t no two ways ’bout answerin’ thet.”

“Eh?”

“Ye ’ll hev to go.”

This was confirmatory of Zach’s own first impressions. He walked apart and read the letter again. It is not to be denied that it caused a very perceptible stir in his blood. Remembrances of Burr and his memorable words come back. For years he has been waiting, he hardly knows for what, — a chance, a hearing. Suddenly a door opens before him leading he knows not whither, and from within an unknown voice cries, “Enter!”

His mind made up, two things remained to be done: to settle up with Mrs. Becky, and to inquire of "Square" Thompson what disposition the late Obadiah Phips had made of the prize-money given him by his son to invest. *

Upon this point he received a prompt and satisfactory report.

"Yes, yes, to be sure," said the old attorney, fumbling over the contents of his leather box, "'t was your money, — your name is Zachary, — yes, I remember; he told me all about it. Ah, here it is! Your father, young man, was one of the best judges of real property in this town; had a scent like a dog for a good investment. Now this matter," untying with deliberation some dusty old papers as he talked; "let me see, the original investment was a thousand dollars, or thereabouts. Well, he put that into a note and mortgage. The interest was never paid; I guess he never very much expected it would be. He foreclosed in due time, reduced the premises to possession, and when the equity expired he patched up the old buildings a little, and let the place for just about enough to cover expenses." Zach, listening attentively, did not look impressed with this evidence of paternal shrewdness. "Now, just before his last sickness, he was in here one day talking about this business, — you ain't bound, of course, by anything he said. I'm only giving you his opinion for what it's worth. The old man said he should let that pot simmer for four or five years, and then he ended up by giving me a wink."

On going out next morning to call upon Mrs.

Becky, Zach found her in a faded calico gown mopping the entry floor. Quickly controlling a slight embarrassment, she said, as she pushed aside her slop-pail to make room for him, —

“I did n’t ’spect company quite so early. Walk into the front room, won’t ye, an’ set down? It’s a pooty hot day.”

Too much preoccupied to heed the housewife’s discomfiture, Zach walked into the darkened keeping-room and took a seat.

Mrs. Becky did not keep him waiting. Having washed her hands, smoothed her hair, and tied a white handkerchief about her throat, she came in with an ill-controlled look of curiosity.

“You — ahem — you ben to see Square Thompson yit?”

“Yes.”

“’D he show ye — ’d ye read the will?”

“I did.”

“Wall, — h-h-hem! Obadiah did it, an’ he did it jest as he wanted to, I s’pose; an’ after all, ’tain’t nobody’s business but his’n.”

This comment was uttered with a certain air of defiance which was not lost upon the listener, who dryly remarked, —

“He evidently never expected me to come back.”

“I dunno ’bout that,” returned the executrix defensively, adding with a little deprecatory flutter, “It’s kind o’ out o’ repair now, but I s’pose it could be fixed up so ’s to be wuth sumthin’ to anybody thet was in that kind o’ business.”

Zach stole a quiet look at the speaker. Her

apologetic tone was significant. It was plain, moreover, that she had not lately visited the neighborhood of the malthouse.

There followed a long pause which, although she tried several times, the widow found it difficult to break.

"Wall, what 'bout the rest on 't?" she suddenly burst forth.

"Eh?"

"Ef ye read the will, ye see thet ther's sumthin' extry comin' to you in the shape o' money."

"Yes."

"Thet's a legacy. Of course it belongs to me to pay it, an' I want to git it settled. I must confess it puts me out to be called on so suddin. It's a sight o' money. I dunno, I'm sure, — when be ye goin' away?"

"To-morrow."

"What say?" she cried, with a flash of her old militant energy. "To-morrer? Ye're crazy! How d' ye think I'm goin' to git the money? I declare for 't, it puts me all in a fever. I can't do it, I tell ye. But there — there'll be papers to sign, of course, an' we've got to go to the Square's anyway."

She clutched at the momentary reprieve as a drowning man at a straw.

Next day, on the stroke of the hour, Zach appeared at Squire Thompson's office, where Mrs. Becky had already been waiting a full half hour. At her request the lawyer drew up a form of receipt

discharging the executrix from all further obligation to the legatee.

Bringing forth the late maltster's well-worn leather wallet, Mrs. Becky, with nervous scrupulosity, counted out the precious banknotes, and handed them to the legatee with the air of one committing them to the flames.

CHAPTER XXV.

EARLY next morning, accompanied by the faithful skipper, Zach made his way to Earl's Coffee-house on Hanover Street, and took his place on the fast mail stage-coach, the Flying Cloud, which stood before the door harnessed with four horses, ready to set forth on its long journey.

"Ready" is a word of elastic meaning, and in this connection may be taken with reservations. So far as concerned the stage-traveling public, Jerry Twichell, the burly and experienced driver, declared that "They never was, an' they never would be what you might call really ready, ef you waited till the crack o' doom, an' th' only way is to start on the pint of the hour, ready or no ready."

What with the bestowal of passengers, the strapping on of luggage, the hurrying to and fro of grooms examining the harness and running-gear, the arrival of late letters to be put in the mail, and the coming in of eleventh-hour parcels which were tossed up to a mysterious limbo of odds and ends beneath the driver's feet, the tavern yard presented a bustling scene.

At last, when warning had been given for the third time in the public rooms that the stage for New York was about to start, the rubicund Jerry emerged from the tap-room with a fortified air,

climbed to his seat amongst a litter of portmanteaus, hampers, parcels, and travelers' legs, shook out his reins, cracked his long whip, and the lumbering vehicle went tilting and swaying off to the southward along the Dedham turnpike.

As they turned the corner of Court Street, Zach looked back and beheld Sandy standing disconsolately in the tavern yard, wiping from his lips with the back of his hand the sugary lees of their parting dram.

An hour for dinner at Dedham, and they were away again. Commonplace incidents of travel beguiled the afternoon: a fat man on the top went to sleep and well-nigh rolled off; a nervous woman inside was seized with nausea; the driver, lapsing from the awful dignity of the first few miles, unbent to the pitch of recounting several terrible accidents which had befallen other lines of coaches.

At the end of the first day, the fellow-travelers began to feel a little acquainted, and, seated after supper on the broad front steps of Landlord Clark's hostelry at Medway, they discussed over their pipes the topics of the hour.

Zach was greatly interested to find that the all-absorbing subject for discussion was the Seminole War, and what course the Government would take in dealing with General Jackson. Meanwhile, whatever the Government might do, it was clear enough what these Bostoneers and their neighbors thought about the matter. Right or wrong, General Jackson must be sustained. The argument was as clear as crystal and would pack in a nutshell. He had

been sent down to put an end to the Seminole War. He had put an end to it, — a speedy and effectual end; and if the Government wanted a man to fool and make believe, they must send somebody besides “Old Hickory.”

Listening to sentiments like these, combined with much false statement of fact and many weak and irresponsible conclusions, Zach achieved a triumph of self-control in keeping his mouth shut.

Next morning betimes the disputants were again speeding on their way and slept that night at Thompson, Connecticut. The following day the little Nutmeg State unfolded to them her charms, and gladdened their eyes by visions of a rich and rolling country.

Although the road was none of the best, the jolts and jarrings were soon forgotten on arriving at Coventry, where they found not only a well-cooked supper, but a cordial welcome at the hands of the buxom landlady and her comely daughters, who have been otherwise handed down to fame.

Arriving on the following afternoon before sundown at Hartford, Zach took time for a stroll through the wide elm-shaded streets, which he thought the most charming he had ever seen, and remained firmly of that mind until, at the end of another day's jaunt, they reached New Haven.

Here he was astonished to find the shops and private dwellings well-nigh as fine as those of Boston, although, save for the college and one or two churches, the whole town was built of wood.

The passengers on the Flying Cloud were by this

time old acquaintances. They varied the monotony of the journey by playing "Odd and Even," matching pennies, telling stories, cracking jokes, and now and then, by making the welkin ring with an old-time catch or the refrain of a popular song.

Arrived at Stamford, they were cheered by the driver's declaration that "the brunt of the journey was nigh about over." Thence on through the flourishing towns of Stratford, Fairfield, and Newfield, and along the whole smiling shore of Long Island Sound, they bowled along over smoothest roads and through scenes neat, trim, and well-adjusted as the unfolding scenes of a panorama.

One more stop at Rye, near Morrisania, the residence of the famous Gouverneur Morris, and behold, at last, the great city of New York. Approaching it thus from the landward side, Zach was astonished at its far-stretching suburbs, and almost held his breath at the statement of one of the passengers that the city now contained fully one hundred thousand inhabitants.

Rolling down Broadway with a thundering noise, they drew up at last before Mrs. Avery's, in the Battery, having made the whole journey in less than eight days, thereby bettering the best record ever made by the Flying Cloud.

Improving the half hour before supper, Zach roamed about the greensward of the Battery, studying the shipping in the harbor and watching the sun set behind the Jersey hills.

That evening, accompanied by one of his fellow-travelers, he went to the Park Theatre to see the

renowned actor Edmund Kean in his great part of Richard III. Disappointed on the first entrance of the tragedian by his inferior size, Zach speedily forgot that drawback as the play proceeded. However diminutive in reality, the actor had caught the trick of looking big, and, by the freedom with which he flung himself about, by the working of his brilliant eyes, and the sonorous cadences of his elocution, so dominated the stage that the audience sat thrilled before him. Indeed, one woman in the pit fainted away in the great tent scene, which, although it may well have been due to bad air, was universally attributed to the power of the player.

Willingly would Zach have lingered in the bustling metropolis, which had grown and changed remarkably since his former visit; but, keeping ever in mind his momentous summons, he started next day betimes on his way to the capital.

Through the heart of New Jersey, stopping only at Trenton, he came to Philadelphia, and in the long twilight after supper roamed about the streets, striving to find one place or building only dimly to recall the scene of his memorable setting forth so many years ago on the fateful Washita expedition.

Staying not for sentiment or remembrance, next morning he was again on the way, and arrived, after a two days' tedious ride through a barren country, at the noted city of Baltimore, where the beauty and splendor of the town made ample amends for its dreary surroundings.

Thirty-three miles further on they came to Annapolis, but the tavern to which they were com-

mended, as being "of great repute," proved to be a big barn of a place thronged with dirty, idle negroes, where they had the worst fare and the poorest attendance experienced anywhere on the route.

With a sigh of relief, next morning, Zach climbed upon the roof of the Flying Cloud. It was to be their last day upon the road. But glad as he was to reach his journey's end, he nevertheless experienced a touch of uneasiness, as he reflected upon the unknown nature and the uncertain issue of his errand.

Late in the afternoon, in a pouring rain, they at last rolled into Washington. He was greatly disappointed at its aspect. At first, indeed, it seemed little more than a conglomerate of negro huts, above which, in the distance, towered in bizarre contrast the palatial White House and the vast scaffolded structure of the unfinished Capitol, so lately destroyed by the British.

All about were dreary fields and treeless ridges, intersected at regular intervals by the interminable lines of projected streets and avenues, roughly laid out. Along some of these, occasional mean two-story brick buildings, scattered at wide intervals, served only to deepen the impression of desolation.

Down near the Government Building, to vary the scene, there was a sprinkling of rum-shops and gambling-houses, the doorways of which were filled with loungers. Everywhere the streets were hub-deep with mud.

Having heard much of O'Neal's tavern, Zach went thither, where presently, much to his surprise, he beheld pop in, out of the storm, like a half-

drowned rat, his old friend Monsieur. The two were well content to meet.

It soon proved, moreover, that the house had other and more notable inmates than the little Frenchman, and the new-comer was well-nigh overpowered to find himself sitting at supper in company with several congressmen, one or two visiting governors, a sprinkling of military and naval officers, and several foreigners of more or less note.

The landlord's bouncing daughter, who was destined to cut a great figure in the records of a succeeding administration, with the aid of a brace of negro wenches served the guests, and received with equanimity the rather free jokes and compliments of these grave and merry personages.

Consulting Monsieur upon the proper course to pursue, Zach was told that he must promptly make known his arrival in the capital by a call at the White House.

With his heart in his mouth, yet sustained by an underlying firmness of purpose which heretofore had served him at need, he accordingly set forth, about ten o'clock next morning, to call upon the Chief Magistrate.

He was astonished to find the White House, about which he had heard so much, still unfinished. He found himself, moreover, a little appalled by the show of state which hedged about the august person whom he sought.

The imposing slave, dressed in a dark livery with gilt buttons, who opened the door, doubted, after a deprecating survey of the caller, whether the Presi-

dent would receive him at such an hour, but was prevailed upon to take up his name.

With quickened heart-beat, Zach sat down in the ante-room to wait. His pulses had time to subside to a movement quite normal before he saw or heard anything more of his messenger. Meantime, from a state of anxiety he lapsed into one of weariness, and at last, in the somnolent noontide atmosphere, nodded off to sleep.

Brusquely awakened from this stolen nap by the dilatory negro, Zach was shown upstairs and ushered into the presence of an important-looking man who sat writing at a desk.

Advancing to the middle of the room, the visitor respectfully stood and waited. The man continued to write for several minutes. Presently, without looking up, he uttered with a sharp rising inflection the word —

“Phips?”

“Yes.”

“You come to see His Excellency?”

“Yes — I — the President sent for me.”

“Take a seat!”

Accepting the invitation, Zach wondered whether this could be the Chief Magistrate in person, obliged by etiquette to speak of himself in the third person.

Awaiting the further leisure of this busy personage, Zach took note of his surroundings. The room was large, and plainly furnished. Some maps hung on the wall. There was a bust of somebody on a pedestal. A tall clock ticked in the corner. The carpet, otherwise faded, was worn quite thread-

bare under the desk by the shuffling feet of its restless occupant.

During the hour which Zach waited, several persons were ushered in by the black door-tender, dispatched their business, and retired. From time to time a young man brought papers from an inner room. On one of these occasions the young man addressed the person at the desk as Mr. Mason.

Instantly Zach rose and advanced to the desk.

The secretary, looking up, said coolly, —

“Eh? Have n’t you been in yet?” Then turning to the under-secretary, continued, —

“Somebody the President sent for; — show him in!”

Choking with indignation, Zach passed through the door the young man opened, and found himself at last in the presence of the Chief Magistrate, but without any of that feeling of awe with which two hours before he had entered the house.

He discovered, as the sole occupant of the room, a spare, middle-aged man, busied with some papers at a desk. He was dressed in a drab coat and knee-breeches, with white top-boots, as though he had just returned from an outing on horseback. His scant hair was powdered, and gathered into a cue behind. A voluminous white cravat came snugly up under his chin, while his ruffled shirt, in snowy waves of lawn, rippled in and out of his old-time waistcoat.

Looking up from his work, he presented to his visitor a world-worn but unimpressive face, marked by deep lateral furrows across a rather contracted

forehead, by small, impassive blue-gray eyes, and cheeks hollowed from loss of teeth.

"What can I do for you, sir?" he asked.

"Nothing!" bluntly answered the visitor, indignant at being thus thrust in without introduction.

Dropping his head, the better to look over his glasses, the President surveyed the speaker with mild surprise.

"'T is not my hour for receiving general visitors," he patiently objected, well aware that his new rules of etiquette were not yet widely known to the public, "but I bid you welcome if you come to pay your respects."

"I came because I was sent for."

"What is your name?"

"Zachary Phips."

"Humph," after a long and deliberate reflection. "Yes, I remember, something to do with the Seminoles — with General Jackson. Take a seat, Mr. Phips! I want to have a talk with you."

Finishing a letter which he had been writing, the President signed it with an old-fashioned flourish and, throwing down his quill, fixed his small, intent eyes again upon his visitor.

"So you are Mr. Phips!"

Zach bowed.

"You are young, sir, to have a hand in such a matter as that you wrote me upon!"

Doubtful whether to interpret this as a compliment or a reproach, Zach was silent. Conscious, moreover, that he was being subjected to a jealous if not hostile scrutiny, he looked uncomfortable.

"I found the contents of your paper very extraordinary, sir. Do you know that you took upon yourself a grave responsibility in writing it?"

Zach stared, and hesitated.

"You have brought very serious charges against a most distinguished man, — charges which nothing but the truth could justify; are you prepared to substantiate them?"

"I am," was the prompt and bold answer. "I told the truth, and I am ready to stand by it!"

"Are you ready to confront General Jackson and repeat these charges?" was the next question, put with an emphasis evidently intended to daunt the accuser.

"I will confront General Jackson and his whole court, and call them all the pack of murderers that they are!"

An odd movement took place in the face of the veteran statesman, a movement rather of the blood than of the muscles, which in one of a more delicate complexion would have resulted in a flush. Otherwise he received this violent statement with surprising imperturbability.

"Are you aware that General Jackson went to Florida armed with extraordinary powers?" he asked after a little.

"Whatever his powers, they could not include the right to invade the territory of a friendly nation, to capture their forts, to imprison without warrant the subjects of still another neutral power there sojourning, to execute without fair trial persons not taken in actual war, to decoy by tricks unsuspecting

Indian chiefs on board his men-of-war and hang them like dogs in cold blood."

The chief magistrate coughed a dry little cough, and looked a bit baffled.

"You take a very singular view of this case," he said after a moment's reflection, "the view, I may say, of a foreigner; are you too a British subject?"

"I told you explicitly in the memorial that I am an American."

"Humph! Where were you born?"

"In Boston."

"So! — you were educated, then, at Harvard College?"

A deep flush overspread Zach's face at this involuntary tribute.

"No."

"You have studied abroad?"

"No."

"Where, then, did you acquire this knowledge of history and international law?"

"From private study."

"And the French?"

"I picked it up in New Orleans, — everybody speaks French there."

"How long have you been studying these subjects?"

"Ten years or more."

"What is your profession?"

Again Zach blushed, and for a moment was at a loss, but in the end answered bluntly, —

"I have none."

"You were associated with this Scotchman in

trading, as I remember your account of yourself in the memorial."

"Temporarily and by chance; we met in Nassau, and having nothing better to do, I took up with his offer."

"What were you doing in Nassau?"

"I went there to—to see some friends after being released from prison in Halifax."

"How came you imprisoned in Halifax? Pardon me, young man, it is necessary that I know with whom I am dealing in so serious a matter!"

"I was captured by the British Shannon when she took the Chesapeake."

"You were in our navy?"

"Yes."

"So!—you have served your country, then. How long were you in the service?"

"About two years."

"You can refer to your commanding officers?"

"Captain Lawrence is dead"—

"True, I forgot."

"Commodore Isaac Hull might remember me—I don't know—it's a good while ago, and I was only a midly."

"You were with him?"

"On the Constitution."

The President's face cleared.

"Why, after this record, did you leave the service?"

"Because the war was over, my term had expired, and the country had no further need of me."

"Humph!" The questioner rose, walked about

the room, and looked out of one of the tall windows; Zach remarking the while that he had an ungraceful figure and carriage.

"You came here from Boston?" he asked, after several minutes' silence.

"Yes."

"And what were you doing in Boston?"

"Attending to business connected with my father's estate."

"You are a man of property, then?"

"No — er — I — nothing worth mentioning."

Returning to his seat at the table, the President fixed his eyes again attentively upon his visitor.

"What are your means of subsistence?"

For a moment Zach showed signs of returning embarrassment, but controlling himself, answered simply, —

"I have none."

"No profession, no occupation! You must have turned one and twenty?"

"I am twenty-two."

"You are going back to Boston?"

"I suppose so; I don't know. I shall stay here till Congress comes in."

The brows of the veteran politician contracted into a little frown. He drummed with his white fingers on the green baize cloth before him, and studied his visitor askance.

"'T is a good while; are you content to remain so long idle?"

"No, but I have nothing to call me away."

"Humph!"

The President had the air of refraining to say something which was on the tip of his tongue.

"Have you ever thought of the public service?"

Zach stared, as though not understanding the question.

"You know the French language," went on the Chief Magistrate with the tone of one who convinces himself. "You seem familiar with history and international law, no very common accomplishments. I don't see why—twenty-two years old, you say—I don't see why you shouldn't be able to make yourself useful at some of our embassies abroad."

The flush of delight in the listener's face did not escape the shrewd eyes which were so closely scanning it.

"I will think it over. I will see what can be done. We must have another talk. Meantime," the President got up, and his visitor, taking the hint, followed suit, "say nothing about this Florida matter. You will hear a great deal of loose talk about the town here, but—where are you staying?"

"At O'Neal's."

"You could not be in a worse place," cried His Excellency, with a look of annoyance. "That house is a regular wasp's nest. Take care, then! Not a word of this business yonder. You will need to keep a guard on your tongue, and the least said the better."

CHAPTER XXVI.

RETURNING to the tavern, Zach spent the rest of the day thinking over his conversation with the Chief Magistrate. There were points in it which he did not understand, and which, to his annoyance, did not become clear in meditating upon them. Certain words, certain looks, certain tones of the President, seemed, considered now in retrospect, bristling with insinuation and hopelessly inscrutable. In result, the whole experience proved harassing. One thing which he ought to have discovered remained as doubtful as ever, — the purpose of the Government in sending for him.

Other questions there were, no less vexing: why, despite his apparent composure, had there been such a suggestion of anxiety in the President's manner? Why had every mention of General Jackson's name been accompanied by a visible uneasiness? Why, in fine, had there been the gratuitous hint of foreign employment to him, the bearer of grave and unwelcome charges against a valued servant of the administration?

After much vain pondering over the matter by himself, Zach took Monsieur into counsel. The tell-tale face of the little attorney showed clearly enough his great astonishment at certain parts of the story, but he was very chary of comment or advice. He

professed himself unable to form an opinion upon the matter as presented, and advised a suspension of judgment.

This was certainly safe advice, and as Mr. Monroe had asked for another interview, there seemed nothing for Zach to do but to await His Excellency's leisure.

Meantime, for want of better occupation, he interested himself in studying the new phase of life about him.

The talk among the boarders at O'Neal's, always diverting, sometimes proved suggestive. Coming down late to breakfast one morning, a few days after his call at the White House, Zach found a half dozen or more of his fellow-lodgers lingering at the table.

"I reckon you Federalists 'll keep pooty mum when the general gits up here next month," the landlord's free-spoken daughter was saying.

"No fear o' the old fox showing his head here!" commented a member of Congress.

"Ain't there? He is pooty apt to show his head anywhere, where there's a row."

"So you think there's going to be a row here, Peggy?" asked the member of Congress, with a wink at his fellows.

"You jest wait till Congress comes in an' see! The general's comin' down a purpose to take a hand in it, too."

"Huh! don't you be scared, Peggy! Old Hickory has had all the row he wants for the present."

"He is comin', I tell you. He has written to pa for a room."

This indisputable announcement fell like a bomb-shell upon the little circle, and the triumphant Peggy withdrew in high glee at the sensation she had created.

Neither Peggy's remark nor its effect were lost upon a certain shy and silent member of the breakfast party. Pondering the matter slowly, gradually, like the dawning of day, a light was diffused in his mind. Perhaps the President might also know of General Jackson's purposed trip to Washington. Not impossibly he, too, might have foreseen the "row" likely to ensue on the assembling of Congress. What then?

A puzzling question, and Zach was given a whole fortnight to consider it, during which he heard nothing from the White House. Just as he had come to the conclusion that he and his business were forgotten, he received a note from the busy secretary, summoning him to another interview with President Monroe.

This time the visitor was promptly admitted.

The President was at leisure. His Excellency had plainly given some thought to the business, for, besides Zach's memorial, he had before him a pile of other papers apparently relating to it.

He began without preliminary, and cross-examined Zach about all the transactions which took place in and around St. Marks in a close and searching manner, referring from time to time to the pile of papers, which included, there can be no doubt, certain letters, since famous in history, written by the chief actor in those tragic events.

Zach repeated the story told on his former visit, nor suffered himself to be shaken a jot from his position by the ingenious harrying of the Chief Magistrate.

At last, satisfied or discouraged, the President pushed the papers from him and remained for a time silent. Presently, turning about, he fastened his eyes upon Zach, and proceeded to study his face several minutes without speaking.

"You suggested the other day, Mr. Phips," he at last said, "that you would like a position in the public service."

"The suggestion came from you," was the blunt answer.

"That may be, — it's a matter of no consequence. The point is, you expressed a willingness to accept such a position."

Zach bowed, with an embarrassed look.

"I think at the time I spoke of France, or the Continent, perhaps on account of your knowledge of the French language; but I have since heard that Mr. Rush is in need of an under-secretary" —

"Mr. Rush!"

"Our minister at the Court of St. James."

"You mean London?" demanded Zach, in a fluster.

"London, of course," said the President, puzzled at his visitor's sudden emotion. "It is an excellent place, with a prospect of promotion, and I don't know why," contemplatively, "you would not do. You have certain traits of character," continued the Chief Magistrate, as if thinking aloud, "which

would be of value. You have had a varied experience, and," picking up the memorial from the desk before him, "if this is your work, you write an excellent hand, — no contemptible accomplishment in a secretary."

The President paused with an expectant air, as if to allow the recipient of this flattering offer a chance to express his thanks. The recipient, his forehead contorted with a scowl of perplexity, stood without a word.

The speaker, with a growing look of surprise, went on, —

"Mr. Rush is my personal friend. A word from me would suffice. In your case, contrary to my custom, I am willing to waive the matter of references, so strongly am I impressed with your fitness."

Zach was still silent.

"Well, sir, what do you say?"

"I cannot accept it."

"Sir!" The Chief Magistrate clearly did not believe his ears.

"Your Excellency will excuse me. I have been thinking over this matter since I was here. I have heard some talk about the Seminole War and General Jackson's behavior, — a good deal of talk. I hear that the matter is coming up in Congress, that the general is coming here, and that there is likely to be a great row about it."

"What then?"

"Why, I know a good deal about this matter, — things the public don't know. I know General

Jackson was all wrong; that he acted more like a bandit than a soldier."

"Well?"

"Well, if I accept this position, at your — at the hands of the Government, they 'll say 't was a price paid for holding my tongue."

For a fleeting moment the President looked disconcerted. It cost him an effort to rally, and when he did, it was with an assumption of dignity in striking contrast to his former simplicity of manner.

Looking at Zach a moment, he considered what course to pursue. He decided promptly, and with characteristic shrewdness. "Mr. Phips, take this chair, please," pointing to a seat quite close to him. "I want to have a little confidential talk with you."

Zach moved as requested.

"My dear young man, I need n't tell anybody who has seen so much of the world as you that in Government matters, in affairs relating to the interests of a great people, we have to deal with questions largely, that is, in a broad and comprehensive manner. We must sink out of sight all personal considerations, and think only of the honor and welfare of the nation."

The listener looked as if put upon his guard by this exordium.

"Now," continued the watchful statesman, "in regard to this Florida matter, General Jackson may have been all right or all wrong; that is entirely aside from the point. The point is, that the whole affair is now a matter of history. The harm (if harm there was) is done and cannot be undone.

It came about, moreover, — by what may prove to have been a misunderstanding, — under color of authority from the United States Government. Meantime, there can be no doubt that General Jackson has done his country a great, an inestimable service. Granting, then, that there was no want of good faith in anybody concerned, we are bound, as patriots and statesmen, to accept and justify the general's action as best we can."

Zach looked unconvinced by this clever presentation of the case.

"It may help us to a decision to consider," pursued the President, "that whatever General Jackson did, he *thought* he was right; that there was no intentional wrong-doing. For the rest, it behooves us to leave the Spanish and British Governments to fight their own battles."

The listener hitched in his chair, and looked troubled.

"It becomes us furthermore, as Americans and patriots, — in case we are wrong, which I by no means concede, — to make the best we can of a bad bargain. It is not a matter, mind you, of protecting General Jackson, but of safeguarding the honor and dignity of the United States."

With a look of increased perplexity, Zach sat pondering the matter for several minutes. Then suddenly asked, —

"But what has all this to do with the question of my going to England?"

"Much, or nothing at all, as the case happens to turn. I will not disguise from you that there is

likely to be a very rigid inquiry into this business. Everybody who can throw any light on it will be dragged to the witness-stand, where they will be handled without gloves. If you stay about here, your knowledge of and participation in the matter can hardly remain a secret, and you cannot hope to escape."

"It is the farthest from my intention to escape," a little haughtily.

"Very true, very true; but the story you tell, — very graphic and pertinent as it is, — instead of helping things to a settlement, will tend rather to embroil us in a useless and damaging discussion, of which England and Spain will not fail to take instant advantage."

"But my duty" —

"Tut, tut; you have no duty but the duty of silence. You have to play but one part: the part of a patriot who serves his country in the hour of her need. It is veritably an hour of need, an hour for cool heads, for calm forbearance, for caution, for self-restraint. This may well prove a graver business than it seems. Without the wisest handling it is capable of leading to a war with one or both of these foreign nations. Are you beginning to see my meaning?"

The listener nodded with a look of reservation.

"With regard to you, your acceptance of this position is a small thing, a minor matter, and quite independent of this public business. Somebody has to be appointed. I find in you every qualification for the position. On that ground, and in regard

for your meritorious service in the navy, I appoint you."

Swallowing drop by drop this specious draught, Zach felt the virus of temptation working in his veins.

Noting this effect, the President shrewdly put an end to the interview.

"Take time to think it over, Mr. Phips," rising and offering his hand; "there is no pressing haste. It is not a step to be taken in the dark. Good morning. Let me know when you make up your mind!"

It proved no easy thing for Zach to make up his mind. His mind was not in good malleable trim. It seemed to grow fixed and stiffened in doubt. It needed impulse or illumination from without.

Monsieur, of course, seemed the natural resource, but the cautious little attorney had shown such reserve on the first consultation as to discourage further confidences. The truth is, Monsieur was himself engaged on a business so difficult and delicate that he could not afford to antagonize any strong influence by taking sides on so absorbing a matter as the Florida question.

Moreover, he was very busy. He had interminable depositions to copy relating to the destruction of the Basswood estate. In this work, Zach, having nothing else to do, volunteered his services, which Monsieur only too gladly accepted.

Thus it happened that he was in Monsieur's room a good part of every day. The Frenchman's papers

and letters lay open to his inspection. Preoccupied with his own affairs, he had no curiosity as to his friend's, and mechanically copied the page before him without a thought as to its significance.

Coming in one day after dinner to resume work, he found an extra leaf in Monsieur's handwriting. Was it to be inserted? From the opening clause it was impossible to decide. He read on. Presently he started as if stung. His eyes grew bright with excitement. The blood rushed to his head. He had been reading a passage from a private letter which the lawyer had left open and unfinished on the table:—

“With all these men and influences in your favor I hope for the best results from the incoming Congress. You may count upon my taking advantage of every point in your interests. For the rest, I am glad to hear of your decision to remain in London. I am sure it will prove best for your health and comfort. It makes me feel old to hear of Sylvia's appearance in society. How the years fly!

“ ‘ Qui sait si nous serons demain ! ’ ”

“Ah, *mon ami*, what success she will have! What hearts she will wring! Tell the *petite* she has another father here who will rejoice in her triumphs!”

The impulse and illumination from without had been found. Next day Zach announced to President Monroe his determination to go to London as Mr. Rush's secretary.

CHAPTER XXVII.

IN contempt of question, coincidences sometimes occur in real life as well as in fiction. The fact, therefore, that Zach on the very day he announced his decision to President Monroe received by the morning's mail three letters, should be thought no more remarkable than that some mere hero of a novel should have received them to help out the exigencies of the plot.

Zach himself, to be sure, was not a little astonished. It was indeed a very unusual occurrence, inasmuch as weeks and months often rolled by, during which the postman seemed to have forgotten his existence.

The three letters — in appearance there were but two, for Sandy's contained an inclosure — proved each in its different way of vital interest. The first opened was from the Boston postmaster, announcing that he had received a very fair offer for the malt-house property, which as an experienced dealer in real estate he seriously advised should be accepted.

Sandy's letter, which came next, was on the very same subject, but, oddly enough, to quite a different effect. It was written in apparent excitement, and was needlessly discursive, but the gist of it may be found in the following passage, —

“I begin to think the old man knowd what he

was a-doin of, makin that will. I mean about that land of yourn. Theyre arter it sharp; the post-master will rite an tell ye, but dont do nothin he says. He menes well, but acordin to my lites, he don know no more'n a blind porgy. The way of it is this. Soon as he got the offer he sent word round to me, an I thought it sounded all rite, too, but that very afternoon, I was down to White & Co.s, the fokes that air handlin our coton, an we fell a talkin about things, an I sed Boston's gittin to be a big town, an sez he,—the old man White was talkin,—Yes, tis, but nothin to what its goin to be. New wharves is goin to be built on all this land round here. Dock Square is goin to be covered with big warehouses. Sho! sez I. Sure as fate, sez he. Theres two big blocks a-goin up on this side, an some pooty sharp fokes is tradin for that ther land over yender, pintin his finger right over to your property. I guess you dont want no hint after that, to know what to do. I forgot to tell ye a letter come for ye a spell ago, from New Orleans, an I stick it in here."

The New Orleans letter was written in an angular, unpracticed hand, and was very brief:—

KIND FRIEND, — A word comes to me that you go not to Nassau; that you go far north, to the land of the Algonquins; that you come back no more. My people have faded away. The Place is empty, and nothing is heard but the song of the river and the voice of the winter wind which says to me, Go, follow on to the world of spirits.

White men come and go away, but there is no word for Malee, no voice like that of my friend, which I hear always in the sunshine, on the hills, in the tree-tops, at night when the breath of the Great Spirit moves them. Will that voice never sound in my ears again? I wait.

Excited not a little by the first two letters, Zach found in the third a distraction. It served as a counter-irritant. He was very much moved by it, but whether emotionally or intellectually was not at once apparent. His face showed signs of perplexity, of annoyance mingled with profound compassion. He cut short his packing and walked the floor; he went down to dinner with a moody face, and gave no heed to the lively chatter about him.

Going back to his room, he spent the whole afternoon answering the letter. He began by telling of his new plans of life; of his approaching departure, and the uncertainty of his return. He then went on to repeat the excellent advice he had before given to his correspondent, to wit, that she should return to her own people and busy herself with the welfare and interests of her tribe. He added some kind and sympathetic words expressive of his interest in her happiness, and concluded by regretting that such a vast distance was henceforth to separate him from so good and so faithful a friend.

Having dispatched this admirable letter, his forehead straightway cleared. A load, as it seemed, was taken from his mind, and he addressed himself with returning cheerfulness to the preparations for his departure.

Early the following morning, he went again to wait upon Mr. Monroe. The President received him with an air almost benignant, and when handing him his credentials, added a word of friendly advice.

While Zach stood listening in an attitude of respectful attention, his roving eye fell upon another letter lying upon the table, directed, "Hon. Richard Rush, United States Minister, near the Court of St. James, London, England."

Here was his first lesson in practical diplomacy. He learned it with a readiness which augured well for his future success. In his hand was the make-believe, there on the desk was the real letter of introduction. He was so devoured with curiosity to know how they differed, that he heard nothing of the Chief Magistrate's parting homily.

Next day Monsieur stood upon the porch with Zach when the stage-coach rattled up. As he bade his young friend an affectionate good-by, he drew forth a thick packet directed to Falconer, which he asked Zach to deliver in person on arriving in London.

Zach flushed and hesitated, but the preoccupied little attorney, never dreaming of any objection, had already thrust the packet into his hands in such a matter-of-course way that it was impossible to refuse.

Nothing happened to signalize his journey to Boston. On arriving, he lost no time in hunting up Sandy, who between his delight at seeing his friend so unexpectedly returned, and his struggle to maintain a seamanlike composure, swallowed his quid, thereby bringing on a paroxysm of coughing

which prevented him from returning Zach's noisy salute in any other way than by a vise-like grip of the hand.

Afterwards, in a mutual interchange of confidences over their evening meal of fresh lobster, cold boiled beef, ale, and ship's bread, in the cabin of the "Malviny," the skipper's stoicism was put to a still severer test on learning Zach's purpose of going abroad.

"Wall, Bub, it's all right, I s'pose; it's nateral enough fer you to want ter go, an' I guess ye'd better. Fact on 't is, nobody ever knows what he doos want tel he has knocked round an' bumped up agin things hisself. But I've ben through it, an' I tell ye, youngster, th' ain't no better country 'n oun, an' th' ain't no better fokes now'eres than our own fokes."

Thereupon Zach explained as fully, perhaps, as he had acknowledged them to himself, his motives and purpose in going abroad. It is significant that he did not include in this explanation all the facts relating to his appointment. Happily, it seemed a matter of course to the skipper that Zach should step without aid or influence from one honorable employment to another.

Next morning betimes, in company with Sandy, Zach went around again to view the malthouse property. With the confirmatory hint from White & Co., the place now took on quite a different aspect. The whole neighborhood bristled with opportunities. Progress lurked in every dirty alley round about, ready to stalk forth and to convert the squalid

neighborhood into the most flourishing commercial quarter of the town.

Sandy, who in his letter had shown a keen interest in the matter, now, in speculating upon the probabilities of value under the changed conditions, became feverishly excited, lapsed into a profound silence, put in quid after quid, and strode restlessly over the lot in a futile effort, as it seemed, to saturate it with tobacco juice.

On the way back to the wharf, they dropped in to see the postmaster. That worthy functionary, interrupted in the act of taking a first reading of one of the foreign journals passing through the office, delayed not to introduce the subject of the real estate, and repeated with unction the advice given in his letter.

The skipper was seized with another fit of coughing, and fidgeted in his chair.

He had no need. Zach, recalling the method of Peter Cook, behaved with the aplomb of a veteran. As the postmaster became warm in urging his opinion the owner grew more indifferent, and, indeed, quite disinclined to part with the estate, referring with great effect to the sentiments and associations connected with a spot known to him from earliest childhood.

Sandy, who had put in three quids in five minutes, here emitted a sound like that of stifled cachinnation, and strode in some embarrassment to the window.

They came away, leaving the postmaster filled with apprehensions that the bargain would fall through.

The Peter Cook tactics bore speedy fruit. Early next day the postmaster came to pay them a visit on board the "Malviny."

Zach was seated on deck, smoking his pipe. Sandy, noting the arrival, lost no time in working round into earshot.

The visitor, after remarking that it was a fine day, that it was unusual weather for the season, that the wind was going to get round into the northwest by and by, suddenly broke out, —

"'Bout that business yesterday, cap'n."

"Well?"

"Haven't made up your mind to take my offer yet, I s'pose?"

Zach shook his head.

"Do you want to sell that property, anyway?"

"Hm-m!" Zach yawned most effectively. "I don't know. I ain't in any great hurry about it. Perhaps I'd better let it be till I get back."

"You goin' away?"

"Yes."

"Goin' to be gone some time?"

"No-o; well, that is, two or three years, perhaps."

"Don't say!" a faint trace of agitation on the part of the postmaster. "Goin' far off?"

"To Europe!"

"The d—er—deuce! That is a long way off. Well, now, Mr. Phips, it's none of my business, but I should think you'd want to get rid of that property before you went. I—it's rather risky. I don't know what Mr. — what my party will say,

but I'll take the responsibility of offering — er — four thousand dollars. Come, what do you say?"

Zach shook his head with a pitying smile, which would have done credit to Peter Cook himself.

"Oh, well, then, I've got through. I guess you don't want to sell very bad."

Zach and the skipper exchanged glances as the discomfited factor withdrew, and refilled their pipes.

"I'll gin thet feller half an hour ter come back," said Sandy, pressing down the bulging coals in the top of his pipe.

But the skipper had underestimated the agent's adroitness; it was full three hours before he reappeared. The interview which followed thereupon was very short.

"Mr. Phips," said the factor, coming straight to the point, "I've come back to make you one more offer for that prop'ty. My folks say they'll give forty-five hundred dollars. It's a heap of money, an' I don't know what they're thinkin' of, but that's their lookout."

"I won't take it," said Zach promptly.

The postmaster stared in real or affected amazement.

"Refuse four thou-s-a-n-d five hundred dollars!" he at last ejaculated, with a truly artistic accent and expression.

"Yes."

Sandy, hacking away at his plug, seemed in doubt whether to fill his pipe or his mouth, but ended in filling both.

"Oh, well," — the good man interjected ironical

little bursts of laughter between every two or three words, with an effect which can be only hinted at, — “as I said before, you don’t want to trade very bad. I don’t see what you expect. P’raps you think you ’ve got a gold mine over there. However, that ’s your business; this is a free country, and you can do as you like. What ship you goin’ in?”

“The Twin Sisters.”

“When does she sail?”

“Expects to get off to-morrow.”

“To-morrow!”

A little look of consternation passed over the postmaster’s seasoned face as he stepped down into his boat. Sandy looked after him, as he rowed away, with a satisfied nod, and went back to his work without a word of comment.

Just before sunset, the boat was seen coming back again. The postmaster looked a little shamefaced, and thought, perhaps, to give his visit a less significant look by remaining in his boat. He stumbled a little over his explanation.

“I come back — I was thinking — er — we ’d like to know, Cap’n Phips, what you *will* take for that land?”

“Ten thousand dollars!”

“Je-e-rusalem!”

This time the good man’s astonishment was unfeigned. Rallying in a minute, with a feeble laugh he ejaculated, —

“Of course, you ’re joking.”

“Not a bit.”

Sandy, meantime, sat with averted face and every

nerve under iron control, but it was evident, from a movement under his whiskers, that the saliva in his throat had all dried up from pure agitation.

Meantime, the postmaster was taking his leave, this time in good earnest.

"I say, cap'n," he projected for a parting shaft, "if you ever do make up your mind you really want to sell, let me know. Good day! Hope you'll have a good voyage!"

"Wall," said Sandy, as the boat pulled out of earshot, "that fish is tired o' bitin'."

There was a distinct note of regret in the skipper's voice, and it was clear he thought Zach had carried his bluffing policy too far.

Next morning, as the pair sat at breakfast in the little cabin, word was brought that a stranger had come aboard to see Mr. Phips.

"Bitin' agin," cried the skipper, with kindling eyes. "Now, look out, Bub! don't let 'em slip the hook agin!"

Zach finished breakfast at his leisure, and came on deck with a look of unconcern.

The stranger, who proved to be the postmaster's principal, was a shrewd-looking Boston merchant. Introducing himself and his business with an impressive air, he showed a disposition to skirmish. Zach cut him mercilessly short.

"Excuse me, I am to sail for England to-day. My things are not yet aboard ship. I have no time to talk. I gave your agent my price for this land. I will not take a penny less, and I will have no more words about it."

Whereupon, turning on his heel, he went down again into the cabin. Sandy, who still sat at the table, looked up aghast at this evidence that the bargain was again off.

Zach, plunging into the hurly-burly of his state-room, began to pack. Directly, the stranger was at his side again.

"Mr. Phips, give me three minutes' time!"

"Not a minute!"

Sandy looked ready to explode.

"Won't, eh? Well, I'll take them whether you will or not. You ask ten thousand dollars for that scrap of land around there. It's an outrage, it's highway robbery, but I've got to have it, and I'll give the money. Come along, then," he concluded peremptorily. "Come to the Squire's and get the deed made!"

"Not I!" said Zach composedly.

"Eh?"

"I told you I have no time to spare, and I will not go a step out of my way to make this bargain."

The tradesman looked apoplectic. Sandy, unable longer to contain himself, got up and strode out of the cabin.

"If you bring the deed and money to me here before I get ready to leave, well and good," continued Zach, busily stowing away shirts and shoes and underwear indiscriminately; "I will sign it, and the land is yours; otherwise you are giving yourself unnecessary trouble."

With a loud oath the stranger bounced out of the cabin. In two minutes more he was clear of the

schooner. In an hour he was back again with deed and money. In twenty minutes the thing was done, Zach, with commendable prudence, having first read the deed and counted the money.

Thus in the twinkling of an eye, from a poor man he had become rich. He felt a sudden giddiness as he stood watching the boat row away, and walking aft, sat down and put his hand to his head.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

AT the entrance to Portsmouth Harbor, Zach received his first impression of England,—a profound and striking impression.

Besides the docks and storehouses, which were surprising enough, there was the forest of merchant shipping flying the flags of every nation; there were the amazing arsenals, batteries, and fortifications, and the formidable array of line-of-battle ships and frigates. For the first time he realized the hardihood of the Yankees in daring to go to war with a nation having resources like these. All the more, he reflected with pride upon the result.

Once landed, he lost no time in getting up to London, where upon recommendation, he took temporary lodgings in a quiet house in Conduit Street.

London awoke in him a wonder and admiration which caused Portsmouth to be forgotten. The shops and houses, standing in actual contact, and extending for miles in every direction; the endless, never-ceasing, never-lessening crowds, coming no one knew whence and going no one cared whither; the deafening roar of the endless procession of vehicles, from the humble push-cart of the bawling chapman to the thundering coach and six, manned by fat drivers in triangular hats and tassels, and sleepy footmen sporting cockades and canes, — never had

Zach's provincial wit conceived of anything so grand, so droll, so infinitely diverting.

In the houses, he was greatly disappointed. Did fine lords and ladies and people of fashion live in these plain, smoky brick dwellings? He hardly knew what he expected, but it was certainly something quite different from these.

In the way of public buildings there were some satisfying exceptions, as he found later when he had occasion to cross from the West End and go into the city proper by way of Temple Bar, and along Fleet Street, Cheapside, and Ludgate Hill, in the direction of the Tower, where the Lord Mayor's palace, the Bank, India House, and the Royal Exchange surpassed his largest expectations.

His first bewildering impressions having in time given way to better regulated notions of the life about him, he saw the need in some sort of adapting himself to it.

With this intent he went on a round of the tradesmen, and was duly decked out in a long-skirted blue coat trimmed with brass buttons, a white waistcoat, a ruffled shirt of finest cambric, a standing collar, a voluminous cravat of snowy lawn, tight breeches, gaiters, and a tall, bell-crowned hat of white beaver.

Thus equipped, he set out one morning to wait upon Mr. Rush. He found him in a quarter of the town which he had not yet seen, namely, Marylebone parish, north of Oxford Road. The minister's house was situated on Baker Street, a locality, as he afterwards learned, much frequented by members of the diplomatic body.

It had the same gloomy aspect as other parts of the town which he had seen, on account of the wearying uniformity of its architecture. There were everywhere the same smoky brick houses, to which here a needless sepulchral effect had been added by the dusty iron palings which guarded the areas and the heavy railings of the same uncompromising material which adorned the brown stone doorsteps.

Forbidding without, these dingy dwellings had, as the visitor presently discovered, an inviting air of comfort and luxury within, with their white stone staircases, solid furniture, and sumptuous hangings.

Arrived at the door, Zach drew forth his card-case, — an elegance which he had adopted since his arrival in the metropolis, — and, with a conscious air which well-nigh betrayed him to the footman, sent up his name to Mr. Rush.

That gentleman, who promptly appeared, and greeted him in the most cordial fashion, proved to be a handsome man in the prime of life, with ingratiating manners and an unexpected air of distinction.

As Zach was to be immediately attached to the minister's person, he was taken at once into the family, a servant was sent to Conduit Street for his luggage, and meanwhile, Mr. Rush took the first step towards making him feel at home by giving him a general notion of his duties, the persons with whom he would be brought in contact, and the etiquette to be maintained in his intercourse with them.

It was evident from the curious and interested looks with which, while he talked, the minister regarded his young secretary, that the President's private and confidential letter had already been received, and Zach felt a stirring of his former curiosity with regard to its contents.

"And the Secretary of State," said Mr. Rush, after hearing Zach's account of his last interview with the President, "did he intrust you with any inclosure for me?"

Zach replied with a blank look, and a shake of the head.

"But you saw—you called on Mr. Adams before coming away?"

"No-o."

"Humph! He knew, of course, of your coming to me from the President?"

"I don't know."

Mr. Rush controlled his arching eyebrows, and repressing a dawning look of astonishment, adroitly changed the subject.

The bewildered secretary reflected with mortification that he was still in the A B C's of diplomacy.

At luncheon the new attaché was introduced to the family: Mrs. Rush and four small children, who, contrary to English notions, were brought to the table with their elders. Mrs. Rush was very gracious, but had so much to say of the former secretary, Colonel Taylor of Virginia, that Zach was filled with misgivings as to how he should ever succeed in taking the place of such an accomplished person.

After having become duly settled in his office, the new secretary one day dressed himself with great care, and went to wait upon Mr. Falconer.

"Grosvenor Square," written upon Monsieur's package, proved to be quite the most beautiful bit of London he had seen; to wit, a large garden of six or more acres laid out with picturesque walks and shrubberies, embellished by a gilt equestrian statue of George I., and surrounded on every side by magnificent private dwellings.

Here, next door to the Earl of Westmoreland, then a prominent member of the Cabinet, lived his old employer, in the finest house Zach had ever been in.

Falconer showed himself quite at home in the midst of his magnificence, and Zach could not help thinking how well his assured air harmonized with it all.

Even the little touch of condescension in his manner seemed in place, as was also the indifference with which, while promptly recognizing his visitor, he failed to note the metamorphosis which had been wrought in him.

Civilly expressing his thanks for the trouble taken in transmitting the packet, he made no apology for opening it. While examining its contents he perfunctorily questioned the bearer: when had he arrived in London? Was this his first visit? How long did he purpose staying?

To Zach's circumstantial account of his appointment in the household of the American minister, of which he heard not a word, he replied absently,

"So, indeed! and Monsieur Lescomt, you left him in Washington?" rising, as he spoke, to ring the bell.

When the servant appeared, he ordered some wine, which the visitor on being served very stiffly refused.

Not until he rose to go did Zach muster courage, and then with very evident embarrassment, to ask after the family.

"Family," echoed Falconer, with a disconcerting inflection.

"Miss Sylvia!"

"Miss Falconer? Thank you, she is well."

Altogether, Zach took his leave with a defeated air. On the way back he realized how long he had been counting on this interview, and how much he had expected from it.

He summed up the matter in its bald reality. He admitted no illusions. Although civilly received, he had been so effectually snubbed that he could never go again. Before reaching Baker Street, his stuffed bosom was seething with indignation, wounded pride, and divers other disturbing passions.

Moreover, if the entire truth be told, combined with the heavier emotions above enumerated, there was mingled a feeling of stupefaction that a person so glorified by London finery and a functionary so distinguished by the confidence of his Government could be thus coolly contemned.

Luckily, in his new position there was small leisure to brood upon these things. Every hour was

filled. A multitude of details must be learned. The new secretary, therefore, had perforce to shake off his vapors and to apply himself with vigor.

He soon showed his mettle. That is to say, in the ordinary routine of his duties he could be trusted to act with common sense. His watchful superior, noting this rarest of all qualifications, presently began to take him into closer confidence and into consultations upon matters of moment.

Besides serious official duties there were other and lighter requirements attached to his position. After a little he was included in certain social invitations. Upon occasion, when her husband was busy or indisposed, he escorted Mrs. Rush to routs, to concerts, or to the theatre. Participating, too, in all domestic festivities, he little by little acquired a familiarity with etiquette which enabled him to recall with amusement his old Nassau experience.

It fell to him one evening to escort Mrs. Rush to the Covent Garden Theatre. He had not been to a play-house before since he went to see Kean in New York. He looked about, with the eager delight of a novice, upon the brilliant decorations of the house, the gayly-dressed audience.

Mrs. Rush, nodding to acquaintances on every side, pointed out in an undertone the celebrities. The secretary did not heed her; his eyes were fixed with a glare of indignation upon the drop-curtain, where were depicted facsimiles of the flags of all the nations which had been conquered in war by Great Britain. Amongst these trophies he recognized the stars and stripes.

He was only recalled to himself by the rising of the obnoxious curtain and the entrance upon the scene of the famous Miss O'Neil as Bianca. Then, indeed, everything was speedily forgotten.

When the curtain at last fell upon the third act, relieved from the strain of attention, Zach suffered his eyes to wander about the house, and bethought him that here were gathered the beauty, wit, and fashion of the greatest city in Europe.

Meantime, Mrs. Rush, commenting upon the play, presently found that she was not heeded. Turning about, she discovered that the eyes of her escort were riveted upon a party in a neighboring box: an elderly man, accompanied by a young and elegantly dressed woman.

"How beautiful! — do you know who she is?"

The involuntary exclamation was the most eloquent form of tribute.

Deaf to the question, and oblivious as it seemed of the very presence of his companion, Zach gazed as if transfixed at the pair in the box.

After a little, the young woman turned about and leisurely surveyed the house. Her eyes fell in turn upon the trembling secretary and calmly passed him by. Again they traversed the circle, and again encountered the gaze of the agitated young man. Unable longer to control himself, he rose from his seat.

Directly, a lightning-like change passed over the girl's face. Her cheeks flushed. She too started, and barely stifled an exclamation. Again Zach rose, and unheeding time or place stretched out his

hands. At that moment, with a flourish of music, the curtain rose upon the fourth act. Mrs. Rush called upon her escort for some service. His attention was momentarily distracted. When he looked again towards the box, Sylvia had disappeared.

CHAPTER XXIX.

AMONG the notable persons with whom Zach was brought in contact through his position at the embassy was his own famous compatriot, the president of the Royal Academy.

Sir Benjamin West was in the opinion of the day a genius. Zach, who had rudimentary notions of art, knew no better. Neither, it seems, from his own confession, did Mr. Rush himself. Neither, for the matter of that, did the rank and file of his well-informed and clever countrymen. No American of the last century, indeed, presumed to have an opinion upon art. It may seem ground of regret to enlightened critics of our civilization that we have ever shifted from that wholesome and tractable state of innocence.

As the worthy Quaker artist had in the course of a laborious life filled some vast stretches of canvas with uninspired scenes from Scripture and history which the world regarded with wonder, he had grown correspondingly rich and famous, and had thus become a natural object of admiration to his countrymen.

It chanced upon one of his visits to Baker Street that the old gentleman took note of the young secretary, and thinking, perhaps, to make use of his striking features and stalwart figure in a historical

painting then in hand, invited him with such cordiality to his studio that Zach could find no good excuse for not going.

Accordingly, on his next outing, he took occasion to present himself at the artist's door. Entering, he stopped awestruck near the threshold. It was a scene well fitted to impress the layman: the walls covered with huge canvases, the easels, the hangings, the plaster casts and other curious lumber disposed about a large room, in the midst of which stood the venerable painter, with his top-heavy wig, his loose gown, and his bent figure, talking with impressive emphasis to a party of visitors.

As the group in its circuit of the room approached him, Zach, not yet cured of his shyness, busied himself with an unfinished canvas on the easel, when, interrupting the painter's purling discourse, he heard the sound of a familiar voice, and the next moment felt a light touch upon his arm.

He turned, and found himself face to face with the breathless Sylvia.

For a moment neither spoke. Meantime, Falconer, accompanied by the artist, advanced up the room, seeming not to remark his daughter's movement. Sir Benjamin was the last to recognize the new-comer, and unconsciously complicated an already awkward situation.

"Ah! 'T is you! Glad to see you! Mr. Phips, Miss Falconer, Mr. Falconer. One of my own countrymen, sir; a young gentleman of much talent, connected with the American embassy."

Looking courtesy and benevolence personified,

Falconer bowed from a Himalayan altitude, dropped an appropriate word, and passed on. Sylvia, despite a summoning look from her father, lingered for a moment's talk.

"You saw me at the theatre?"

"Yes — I — but you went so suddenly" —

"Papa wanted to go. The play bored him. But I was so astonished — I did n't know — When did you come to London?"

"A month ago."

"Why did you not let us know?"

"I went to your house."

"To Grosvenor Square?"

"To be sure."

"And we were out?"

"No."

"No?"

"I saw your father."

"Papa? and he did not — you did not ask for me."

"I did."

"But why" —

"He said you were well, and" —

"And" —

"Bowed me out."

"Sylvia!"

Notwithstanding its calm pitch, there was an imperative note in the voice.

"Yes, papa."

"'T is time we were going."

"When shall we — where can I see you again?"

"Sylvia!"

"Yes, papa. You have come to London to live, did Sir Benjamin say? At the American embassy? How did you ever — Oh, I am so glad!"

"My dear, I am waiting."

"I am coming, papa. Good-by, good-by Za—I mean Mr. Phips. When shall we — when will you — Good-by!"

The Falconers gone, the kindly old artist gave Zach the history of much of the misdirected effort on the walls about them.

The explanation was thrown away. Other voices were sounding in the young man's ears, other thoughts were surging through his brain. London had suddenly become a bigger, brighter world. Muddy streets, cloudy skies, and dingy houses were forgotten, and in a trice its whole atmosphere seemed aglow with exhilarating promise.

On arriving home he found the Rushes about driving away to a dinner-party, which left him alone for the evening. An impulse seized him to fly around to Grosvenor Square. He remembered then that London had another phase: that it was, in effect, a prison; that laws stricter than those of the Medes and Persians hedged about each human being, and regulated his outgoings and incomings; that far from being at liberty to follow out his impulses, he was little better than a slave. Here he stood in Baker Street, and yonder in Grosvenor Square sat Sylvia at the window, peering wistfully out into the night, yet he could not go to her.

Why?

For answer, Falconer's face came back to him

with its expression of immeasurable remoteness, and straightway there arose mountains upon mountains of obstacles, cloud-tipped and impassable.

Rising after a long contemplation of these mountain ranges, he flung impatiently about the room. What was all this? Should he let himself be hedged about and hindered by intangible nothings? Were the men who had made history so stayed?

He sat down again before the fire, and followed out this new line of thought. Insensibly his face cleared, his eye brightened, and the lines about his mouth became tense with resolve.

Nevertheless, he did not go to Grosvenor Square, for he reflected that Sylvia herself had not invited him. Meantime, it seemed doubtful whether they would ever meet again. He improved all his outings in frequenting the haunts of the gay world; he rode in the park, he went to the theatre in vain. Several weeks, barren of opportunity, thus passed.

One night he was included in the invitations to a rout at Almack's. Being in no very cheerful frame of mind, he was disinclined to go. He did not know what a rout was, and Almack's had a formidable sound.

On arriving, and beholding the gayly-thronged rooms, he was struck with dismay, and clung helplessly to Mrs. Rush's side. With kind thoughtfulness that lady introduced him, as occasion offered, to divers agreeable young women, with one of whom upon his arm he joined the promenaders.

After a time the music struck up, whereupon everybody began to dance. Zach was panic-stricken.

Crowded to the wall by the hopping, whirling throng, he cast a nervous glance at his partner. She stood tapping the floor with an impatient toe, and looked expectant. He had wild notions of shaking her off and flying the room, of explaining that he had a wooden leg, or a tendency to vertigo. Happily a brisk young man came up and took her out. With a long, deep sigh of relief, Zach turned to make his escape, when suddenly the crowd parted before him and revealed a vision — Sylvia, in the splendor of a ball-room dress.

She saw him, smiled, waved her fan, and went whirling past. It was maddening. Why had he never learned this trick of bobbing and jumping about, and shaking the legs to rhythm? Here was a new and unexpected stumbling-block in his path. How many more was he to encounter? Was his whole life to be filled with them?

He went about black as a thunder-cloud. Between whiles, in the dance, he caught glimpses of Sylvia, gay, smiling, radiant. But that he felt like a bull in a china shop, he would have gone to her. He could not take her out. She would be ashamed of him as a man forever at fault. He could not muster courage.

Meantime he was at once gratified and tormented to see that she was evidently looking out for him. He hated her partners, he hated the occasion, he hated himself for dodging and skulking to escape her notice.

In this mood he suddenly came across Falconer talking with a group of elderly men. One of them

was a member of the Cabinet, and greeted Zach. Falconer regarded him quietly, without recognition. It was the needed touch. With kindling eye and tightened lips he walked directly across the room and took a seat just vacated by Sylvia's side.

She received him with warmest welcome, and in answer to his shamefaced confession that he could not take her out, simply laughed.

In the midst of their talk, Falconer suddenly appeared stooping over them.

Murmuring a perfunctory "With your leave" to Zach, and acknowledging his presence with the formal nod he would have bestowed on a stranger, he said, —

"Come, my dear, let us go down to supper!"

"No, papa," cried the spoiled young woman. "You must get another partner, for I am going to supper with Mr. Phips."

Receiving this rebuff with apparent equanimity, the father said, as he moved away, —

"The carriage is ordered for twelve, my dear; I shall look you up a few minutes before. Try not to keep me waiting."

As for Zach, who had risen with a purpose of withdrawing, he was so electrified by this bold insubordination that he well-nigh neglected to take the hint which had been given him.

Next morning, after breakfast, Sylvia and her father had a talk.

"My pet," he began, "how old are you?"

"Truly, do you not know the age of your only child?"

"It has slipped my mind."

"What shocking ignorance! I am eighteen."

"You are no longer a child."

"Indeed I am not; I have been trying a long time to impress it upon you."

"'T is time, then, you ceased to act like one."

"Hoity toity! Is this a scolding?"

"It is a serious talk, my dear, and I want you to listen with attention and respect."

"Don't pucker up your brows, then! You frighten me. Now what is it? Must I stop sitting in your lap? — or give up confectionery?"

"You must stop doing impulsive and ill-advised things in public. You must remember the world looks upon you as a woman, and will expect you to behave with a woman's discretion."

"Mercy upon us! See how the doctors disagree! Mason says that I am getting to be the very pink of propriety, — since I gave her that lace cap."

"Above all, you must be careful of the character and standing of your associates."

"And are not my associates the same as your associates? Papa, dear, you are getting oracular!"

"You chose to spend a good part of last evening in the company of a young man of whom we know nothing."

"Who?"

"This young Phips."

"Of whom we know nothing?"

"No; he came to us a waif, a ragamuffin. He lived with us as a servant. He is not a fit associate for you."

“Truly?”

“It was all very well on the plantation, when you were children; but now, my love, it is very different. Now it is most improper, and I must request you to have nothing more to do with him.”

“Poor old Zach!”

“He is neither poor nor old, and I repeat, he is not a proper companion for you.”

“Why is he not?”

“Because,” answered Falconer firmly, “he is not a gentleman.”

Echoing the crushing sentence, Sylvia stared blankly after her stately parent, as with a self-satisfied air he disappeared from the room.

Taking a hint given him at Almack’s, Zach came soon after to call. He was beaming, he was elated, he was almost garrulous, he was quite at ease. As he sat talking he gradually became sensible that his hostess was regarding him with an anxious, critical expression, and that for the first time in her life there was an indefinable air of constraint in her manner.

Directly this conviction came home to him he demanded, with characteristic bluntness, the cause.

Sylvia looked startled at being detected, and strove to hedge.

“Has anything happened?” he persisted.

“Ye-es — no.”

“What is it?”

“Papa and I have had a talk.”

“About me?”

“Yes.”

His eyes kindled with interest, and he perceptibly nerved himself as he asked, —

“What did he say?”

“He — he said — er — Oh, what fathers are always saying, — that you — er — were not — but what does he know about it? — that you” — She finished the halting sentence with a forced little laugh.

“What did he say?” came the demand again, with inexorable emphasis.

“Oh — er — why, that you are not a proper person for — er — my — me to associate with. Was there anything ever so absurd?”

Slowly, — slowly, the red blood mounted to the listener’s face, and big drops of sweat stood out like beads on his forehead.

“What else did he say?”

“I cannot tell.”

“I insist upon knowing.”

His eyes burned like fire, his tone was imperative. Sylvia took alarm.

“I — he said — but,” with another hysterical laugh, “what does it matter?”

“Go on!” he said fiercely.

“That — that you — Oh, no, no, spare me!”

“No. I will hear all, — I will hear his very words. On your honor as a lady, tell me his exact words!”

Constrained by his growing excitement, she stammered, —

“That you were not a gentleman.”

The listener’s face grew livid. Terrified at the

effect of the words which had been wrung from her, Sylvia flooded him with incoherent and hysterical solace.

"But you mustn't mind papa. What does it matter? You know how absurd he is. He remembers you as you came to Basswood with Sandy, in that — with those shabby clothes, and he doesn't know how you've studied — and — and all you have done since. He forgets that you were in the navy — an officer in the navy, — for I s'pose the American navy is a real navy, — and how you fought on that terrible ship. I really believe he has forgotten all about that, and — and then he is so — so prejudiced, he judges everything from his English standpoint, and — and when he said that dreadful thing about you" —

"He spoke the truth!" broke in the listener sternly.

"Hush! you shall not say it! I will not let you!"

"I say it, and I repeat it," went on the young man ruthlessly. "I am *not* a gentleman. I was not born a gentleman. My father made beer; my mother scrubbed her own floors and washed her own pots and kettles. I am not educated. I have consorted all my life with ignorant, boorish companions. I was not bred a gentleman. I know little of your manners and etiquette. I am continually making blunders. I shall go on making blunders till the end of my life."

"Hush! hush! This is dreadful. I will not listen to you."

"Your father is right," he continued, rising from

his seat, with a face now ashen white, even to his very lips, "quite right. He told a simple truth, which I might have seen for myself." He strode to the door, and, turning, went on in a half-stifled voice, "I am not a fit companion for you. I am not a fit companion for anybody. Master Tileston and my step-mother found it out long ago, — all honor to their intelligence."

He turned to open the door. Sylvia, who had stood as if paralyzed while he spoke, now flew to intercept him. She seemed aglow from head to foot. Her eyes flamed, her whole face flamed. Her voice mounted in a high, quavering tone which threatened every minute to break.

"You shall not go — you shall not! *I* have said nothing. *I* have done nothing. I don't care what papa says. I don't care what the whole world says. I don't care whether you are a gentleman or not. I care only that you are a *man*, — that you are my friend, — my faithful, devoted friend, and I say you are a fit companion for anybody in the wide, round earth, and I will never, never let you go!"

A dry cough resounded through the room. Clasped in each other's arms, deaf to everything but each other's heart-beats, the two had not heard the opening of the door. Turning now, they beheld Falconer on the threshold, regarding them with an attentive look.

CHAPTER XXX.

NOBODY will be surprised to hear that on the occasion of his next outing, Zach took the direction of Grosvenor Square.

As he approached that fashionable quarter, he slackened his pace, showed uncertainty of purpose, and once or twice came to a standstill.

In this hesitating way he at last reached Falconer's house, mounted the steps with a little spurt of resolution, and sounded the knocker.

After waiting patiently for five minutes and impatiently for five minutes more, during which long interval he took occasion several times to repeat his summons with emphasis, it suddenly occurred to him that something unusual was the matter.

Accordingly, stepping back into the street, he looked up at the façade and saw that the blinds were shut and that the whole house had a deserted air.

At a loss what to think, he asked a coachman, loitering near, if he knew the whereabouts of the family. The man stared and shook his head.

Thereupon, in default of anything else to do, he sat down upon the steps. It was only when he awoke to the fact that he was becoming an object of attention to the passers-by that he arose and went stumbling away.

Betaking himself to the park, he walked about

vaguely for half an hour, when, thinking it behooved him to make a definite effort to discover Sylvia's whereabouts, he returned to Grosvenor Square and set about a systematic canvass of the neighborhood, asking at the servants' doors and at the neighboring cabstands for news of the family.

The result was meagre: one person had seen a carriage early in the day drive away from the door, laden with trunks.

Obliged to content himself with this irritating scrap of information, Zach spent a week in idle conjecture. When well-nigh at the end of his patience, there came to him one morning a letter postmarked "Paris." In a little fever of excitement he left his work and hurried away to his own room to read it. It ran, —

DEAR ZACH, — Of course you have been around to Grosvenor Square, and are wondering what has become of us. We came away suddenly, — very suddenly indeed, the morning after you were there. Papa was called here by some very important and unexpected business. We started at such short notice that I had no time to let you know. . . .

I thought papa would say something to me about interrupting us that day in the drawing-room, but he has never alluded to it. I am sure he has n't the least suspicion what a very tragic interview it was for us. You remember how unconcerned he looked, and how civilly he shook hands with you. . . .

I long to see you. I am impatient at every delay. I count the hours, but notwithstanding all, I don't

know where we shall meet. I dare not hope it will be very soon. Indeed, I fear it may not be for a long time, for papa says it is uncertain when he shall get his business dispatched. Oh, that hateful word business! What a tyrant it is, and what slaves men are to it!

Shall I tell you a little secret? Although it is so gay and brilliant here, with skies as blue and sun as warm as ever they were in America, I am already homesick for dear, dingy old Grosvenor Square. Cannot you guess why?

Hoping *very soon* to hear from you I am

Your fond, devoted, obedient servant,

SYLVIA FALCONER.

At odd moments between his official tasks, Zach took occasion to answer this letter the very day it was received. Having restrained himself to the end, he could not forbear adding in a postscript: —

“You are right in your foreboding. I too fear it will be a long time before we meet; business so important as your father’s must necessarily keep him a long time abroad.”

A new subject of distraction here intervened to withdraw the young secretary’s attention for a while from his French correspondent.

Ugly rumors concerning the Arbuthnot and Armbrister incident began to leak out. Thereupon the press teemed with accounts, high-colored and inflammable, of the whole proceeding. The people became excited: the clubs echoed with fierce tirades against General Jackson. “Tyrant,” “ruffian,”

“murderer,” were among the milder epithets coupled with his name. Placards bearing the coarsest caricatures of him were carried through the streets. Supported by the popular clamor, the leaders of the opposition in the House harried the government.

Certain memories were awakened in Zach’s bosom, his blood was fired, and, having his own opinion as to the justice of the denunciation, he had much ado not to come out and bear witness of the truth.

Meantime, from the vantage-point of his official position, he watched with great interest the course of the ministry. Many and anxious conferences took place between Mr. Rush and Lord Castlereagh, wherein it required all the suavity and address of the American minister to satisfy and reassure the suspicious secretary of war.

A remark of the noble lord’s to Mr. Rush upon the subject, accidentally overheard by Zach, has become historic, and is significant of the great strain produced by the incident. A war, said his lordship, might have been produced on this occasion, “if the ministry had but held up a finger.”

Pending the negotiations, Zach received a cautionary word from Mr. Rush about the necessity of strict silence on his part, thereby confirming certain suspicions as to the contents of the confidential letter written by President Monroe.

From this engrossing business at the embassy Zach was aroused one morning, like one awakened from sleep, by receiving a note from Sylvia reproaching him for not answering her letter.

His first blank look of astonishment was promptly succeeded by a flush of indignation. Suspecting what had happened, and eager to justify himself, he straightway set to work and wrote a voluminous reply. Having carefully folded and sealed his letter, he sat for a moment silently regarding it; then, with a triumphant gleam in his eye, took it to Mrs. Rush to write the address.

The day this letter arrived in Paris, Falconer sat yawning over his newspaper until a late hour in the morning. Despite his pressing business he seemed to have much leisure time on his hands, and a stranger might well have thought he was at a loss for something to do. With this bored look upon his face, he was surprised by Sylvia, who came flying into the room, asking breathlessly, —

“Papa, did you see a letter which came for me postmarked London?”

An almost imperceptible movement took place in Falconer’s face, but he answered composedly, —

“When?”

“Two or three weeks ago.”

“Why do you ask?”

“Because it went astray.”

“Whom was it from?”

Not heeding that the tables were being turned on her, Sylvia answered frankly, —

“It was from Zach.”

“Do you mean to say, my dear, that you are receiving letters from that young man without my knowledge?” asked Falconer, pursuing his advantage.

"I mean," faltered Sylvia, fairly cornered by her adroit questioner, "I—I did n't receive the letter I speak of because it did n't reach me, and so," she continued, gaining courage, "I am making a search for it, and came to ask if you have seen it."

"How did he know you were in Paris?" pursued Falconer, evading a second attack.

"Because I wrote to tell him."

"You! my daughter!" in a tone of horror. "A young woman of your birth and breeding write to a strange young man without my approval!"

However well pointed, this thrust failed of its effect.

"Yes," answered Sylvia, firmly. "I wrote to tell him where we had come, and," she went on, disregarding a look of stern disfavor on her father's face, "he wrote me back a long answer which I never received."

"How do you know he wrote you a long answer?" asked Falconer, with dry severity.

"Because I have just received another letter in which he says so."

The questioner did not suppress a look of astonishment.

"The letter I handed you this morning was, then, from him?"

"Yes."

"It was directed in a woman's hand."

"Yes, he seems to have got somebody else to direct it," was the ingenuous answer.

A faint tinge of color, scarcely amounting to a flush, came and went in the father's face.

"And why, my daughter, did you not tell me of all this before?"

"Because you seem to dislike Zach, and I thought it would be disagreeable to you."

"And so you already have secrets from me?" said Falconer, in a tone of reproach.

Sylvia hesitated. Evidently she had not before thought of her action as surreptitious.

"And plot and contrive to do in an underhand way what you know I should disapprove."

These proved home thrusts. The listener looked very much troubled, and only after several minutes of silence answered in a voice filled with tears, —

"Dear papa, I had to make a choice, don't you see? to accept an alternative: either to displease you or slight and grieve an old friend!"

"And do you now think your action right?"

"Ye-es."

"And do you intend to continue this clandestine correspondence despite my objection?"

Unable longer to endure his tone of withering reproach, Sylvia ran to her father and flung herself into his arms, ejaculating between her sobs, —

"Papa, dear papa, don't — don't — don't speak to me so! It is terrible to pain you. I love you with all my heart. Oh, pity me! Whatever I do, somebody must be unhappy, and I shall be the most unhappy of all. Do you not think you can get over your prejudices against Zach? Oh, papa, try! do try, for my sake! I cannot bear to be unfaithful to him."

With a face severe and unmoved, Falconer heard

this confession. He made no answer. For the first time in his life he failed to return his daughter's embrace.

She, overcome with emotion, fled to her room, and shut herself up for the rest of the day.

What Falconer's conclusion upon this matter, pure and simple, might have been, is uncertain, for his final decision was affected by extraneous events.

Several days after, he awoke with an odd feeling in his head, which his valet relieved for the time by applications of hot water. Later, he dropped his fork at dinner, and to his surprise was not able, for several minutes, to grasp it.

He forbore to mention to anybody these trivial matters, but in the course of the following day took occasion to visit a physician. After a long consultation, he came forth with a countenance grave and concerned.

Happily or unhappily, however, he was prevented from brooding upon anything the doctor had told him by another and quite different circumstance.

In his mail, forwarded from London, there came next day a long letter from Nassau, over which he pondered until he brought on again the confused feeling in his head which the doctor had warned him against. Nevertheless, he constrained himself to scratch off two jerky lines in answer to the letter.

"Do not let Woodbine escape from the island! Arrest him at once, and wait advices from London!"

All unconscious of her father's illness and anxi-

ety, Sylvia, after a week's careful consideration, came to him with a serious air and said,—

“Papa, I have something to say to you.”

“Very good, my dear, let us hear it!”

“I know I am a spoiled child; you have said so, yourself, and everybody has said so ever since I can remember.”

“Go on, my child.”

“After having had my own way so long, I have grown to think I must have it, and I am not patient under correction or control, and I think you are partly to blame for that.”

“I fear you are right, my pet.”

“But, having become sensible of this, I have tried very hard of late to watch and discipline myself in this respect.”

“I am glad to hear you say so,” said the father mechanically, but not without an inquiring look, as to what this confession might mean.

“What I want to say now is,” pursued his daughter, intent upon her purpose, “that henceforth I shall try more and more to amend this fault, but” —

“But” —

“There are certain very serious things, — deep and sacred things,” she repeated solemnly, “in which, dear papa, I am not willing to say I will always do as you wish.”

A shadow, gradually darkening and deepening, settled upon the listener's face, but he made no movement to speak.

“Things, dearest papa, which concern not only

my own happiness, but another's, — things which I cannot — cannot obey you in, — and so" —

"So?"

"When one of these — these cases occur, I want you to understand that if I do not — do not yield to your wishes, it is *not* because I do not love you just the same, but because I cannot."

Next morning, Falconer announced that his business in Paris was finished, and that they were to return to London directly.

CHAPTER XXXI.

FALCONER arrived in London much the worse for his journey. Noticing his look of exhaustion as they sat together in the evening, Sylvia was filled with solicitude, and besieged him with little attentions. Such a reversal of their parts irked him, and he sent her away to play upon the piano.

Presently, he astonished her by breaking out, —

“That young what ’s-his-name, my dear, — where does he live?”

“Do you mean Zach?”

“It begins with a P.”

“Phips.”

“That ’s it; you say he ’s still in London?”

“Yes.”

“What ’s his address?”

“He lives with the American minister on Baker Street,” answered the player, thrumming idly with her left hand, while she regarded her father with a look of suspense.

“To be sure” — muttering — “Rush — humph! *he* would know.”

“What do you say, papa?”

“Nothing.”

Next day, notwithstanding Sylvia’s objections, her father insisted upon going to drive. Declining her offer to accompany him, he proceeded straight to Baker Street and sent up his card.

A half hour afterwards, Zach was disturbed at his work by hearing Mr. Rush excitedly calling for help. Hurrying downstairs, he found that gentleman at the door sending off a servant in great haste for a doctor.

Before the doctor came, Falconer had in a measure recovered. That is, he stood up, moved his arms, and spoke. He even affected to laugh, and explained that it was only one of his little confused feelings. Whereupon, having swallowed some brandy and water, he walked across the room, pronounced himself quite well, and announced his purpose of going home. Anxious Mr. Rush said he must not go alone, and looked significantly at Zach.

Astonished to see Falconer in London, when he thought him in Paris, astonished at finding him closeted with Mr. Rush, and still more astonished at his sudden and unaccountable illness, Zach stood stupidly and did not take the hint.

Thereupon, Mr. Rush whispered a word in his ear, when, with great alacrity, he proffered his services and helped the sick man down to his carriage.

Arrived in Grosvenor Square, Falconer cautioned his companion to say nothing to Sylvia of his illness.

Sylvia! Was he then to see her? The suddenness and matter-of-course way in which the suggestion was made put him in a flutter. He forgot where he was, and what he was doing, and on alighting pushed and shoved the sick man about until that impatient person sharply requested to be let alone.

Nevertheless, far from showing any disposition to

part with his escort, the invalid ushered him into the house, led the way to the library, and proceeded to enter upon a conversation the manner and substance of which completed the young man's bewilderment.

"You are, then, in government service, Mr. Phips?"

"Yes."

"May I ask how old you are?"

"Twenty-three."

"Is it your intention to devote yourself to a diplomatic career?"

"It is."

"Humph! It is an honorable profession, but," with a keen look at his visitor, "slow and toilsome."

Busied with speculations as to the purport of this personal examination, Zach neglected to answer.

"Meantime, one must live," pursued Falconer, "and how is a young man to support himself, much less a family, on the beggarly stipend allowed by your country to its foreign representatives?"

Unwilling to provoke discussion, Zach received this criticism upon his government in dignified silence, the critic, meantime, studying his averted face and recalling, perhaps, remembrances of the passionate boy at Basswood and the belligerent midshipman of later years.

The prolonged silence recalled Zach to the situation. Disappointed in a certain trembling hope with which he had entered the house, and altogether puzzled by the whole experience, he rose to go with a perfunctory offer of further service.

Falconer acknowledged it in a tone approaching cordiality.

"I am indebted to you for a very timely assistance. I am better, — in fact quite well, now, as you see. It was nothing to speak of; a passing ill turn brought on by bothering too much of late over business. I must beg you again to say nothing of it to my daughter. Which reminds me, Mr. Phips, why cannot you come and dine with us? Let us see; say this day week?"

Incoherently mumbling his thanks, Zach accepted the invitation with a look which showed a doubt as to whether his host was in his right mind, and went home in a whirl of bewilderment. Zach was unquestionably right in regarding the dinner as a profoundly significant event. Grown wise in London manners, moreover, he went in irreproachable trim. He deported himself with dignity. He talked with ease and sense. The host followed his every word and movement with vigilant criticism. Left alone over their wine, interrupting some conventional commonplaces about English politics, he quietly remarked, to the measureless astonishment of his guest, —

"Mr. Phips, I have been thinking I cannot do better than consult you upon a business matter, — I may say, several matters, which have been troubling me of late."

Forgetful of his diplomatic training, Zach showed in his face an ingenuous appreciation of this unexpected tribute.

"You have been in New Orleans," continued Fal-

coner, in the tone of one talking to himself. "You know the city; you know my plantation; the state it was in before the war; the yield of sugar; the number of slaves, and all. You have also been in Nassau. You have seen my property there. You have been in Washington. You know about Monsieur's work there. In short, — 't is odd I never thought of it before, — you know more than any other person now living about my interests in the States and in the Bahamas."

Zach stared. The thought was evidently as new to him as to his host.

"Now, sir, I may say to you in confidence that of late everything has gone wrong with me. If some help cannot speedily be found, I am in a fair way to lose the bulk of my possessions in the New World, which I will frankly confess would not only seriously cripple me, but" — nodding towards the drawing-room — "impair the prospects of others."

It mattered nothing that Zach's comment upon this surprising overture was unintelligible, for his host was too much absorbed in his recital to heed him.

"My lawyers here say it is imperative that some competent person should go over at once and take my affairs in hand, for I have late news that my agent in Nassau has turned out a rascal."

Zach nodded significantly.

"Yes, yes; there is a prejudice against him, I know; but he was in many ways a valuable man for me. I never found him out, in short, — but 't is of no use crying over spilt milk. My New Orleans

affairs are also in a critical condition. Since my poor old faithful friend and lawyer there died ” —

“Monsieur?”

“You knew him?”

“He is dead?”

“Yes, of a fever caught in that pestiferous town.”

The listener’s face showed such deep concern as to arrest the elder’s attention.

“He was then a friend of yours?”

“One of the best. I owe him everything I have in the way of education. He lent me books, he directed my studies. He took thought and trouble in a thankless task. I had hoped we might both live until I could in some way ” —

Zach stopped: his host’s eyes had grown dim and wandering.

“Pardon me,” he said quickly, “for troubling you with these personal matters. You wanted to consult me ” —

Falconer rallied by a visible effort, and got upon his feet.

“Yes, yes; but not to - night, — another time. Some morning, when,” — he hesitated as if searching his mind for a fit expression, “when I am rested. I will send you word, and if you are willing to give the time, I — I ” — He stopped as if he had lost the thread of thought, and motioned vaguely towards the drawing-room.

As soon as they appeared upon the threshold, Sylvia came briskly forward, took possession of her father, and without too evidently appearing to aid, escorted him to an easy-chair. Then, bringing forth

the evening paper, said apologetically aside to Zach,—

“This is routine: you will excuse us if we do not make a stranger of you.”

But Falconer, noting her purpose, waved his hand, saying, —

“No, no; dispense with that to-night.”

But Sylvia, with an effective assumption of her old childish tyranny, persisted. “Mr. Phips wants to hear the news.”

With a feeble smile, as if understanding the artifice, the sick man yielded.

“Only the news, — nothing but the news, papa; and never one of their comments.”

Whereupon, spreading forth the “Evening Times” upon her knee, she rapidly skimmed its contents.

“Home Life of the Emperor Napoleon in Exile, — Description of St. Helena.”

“Humph! Got you there, Bony, safe enough, now,” chuckled Falconer, in an undertone.

“Doings of the Austrian Court.”

“Who cares about their doings! — go on — go on to something interesting.”

“Plot of the Russians to seize Constantinople.”

“Aha, — at it again; — what’s Castlereagh thinking of? Those filthy Cossacks are bound to have that plum, and they’ll get it, some time, — they’ll get it!”

“Arrival of an Indian Princess from Florida, — comes to seek Redress for her Losses in the Seminole War.”

“Ay, and she ’ll get it, too, never a doubt of it! while a poor white man like me, who lost ten times as much, may whistle for his pains.”

“Insurrection of the Blacks in the West Indies” —

“There, there, my dear, no more; I ’m tired of that. There ’s nothing of interest — go give us some music.”

Every day for a week Zach expected the promised summons to Grosvenor Square. Meantime, he was filled with surprise and curiosity over the sudden change of attitude with regard to himself. It was easy to date it from the day of Falconer’s visit to Mr. Rush. But what had impelled him to visit Mr. Rush? What had Mr. Rush said to him? Had he been led purely by self-interest and the stress of his American affairs? These and a score of other puzzling questions tormented him.

He was pondering all these riddles, while taking an airing in the park one day, when he saw a familiar carriage before him. With an indefinable little thrill he spurred forward to overtake it.

Sylvia was alone; she had left her father with Mason; he was much better.

The two looked at each other significantly. Without any interchange of confidence upon the subject, both felt that they were meeting for the first time under new and happier auspices.

The talk was light and frivolous. Sylvia acted like one intoxicated; her eyes shone, her cheeks glowed. She laughed at nothing. Zach caught the contagion and outdid her in folly.

Thus laughing and chattering, the fond, silly pair trotted down the mall, the happiest fools alive, when suddenly, checking a peal of idle laughter, Sylvia said, —

“What an odd-looking person! Who can she be? Look, Zach!”

With a smile on his lips, Zach turned, and discovered a young woman, dressed in bizarre finery, leaning negligently against the trunk of a huge linden-tree and regarding him and his companion with keenest interest. Meeting his eye, she instantly slunk behind the tree and disappeared in the shrubbery.

“Impossible!” he cried, gazing after her with a stupefied look.

“You know her, then?”

“No-o, yes.”

“She is a foreigner.”

“She came from America, and her name is Ma-lee.”

“The Indian Princess!”

CHAPTER XXXIII.

ZACH'S patience was at last rewarded: one morning came the long-expected message that Falconer wanted to see him.

The experiment, as it seemed, proved satisfactory, for the first conference was followed by many others. Whether impressed by a certain air of reserve power in his young adviser, or by minor qualifications of clearness of head and steadiness of purpose, the stress of Falconer's anxiety was appreciably relieved, and the result was a measurable improvement in his health.

A natural consequence followed. Insensibly, Zach became very much at home in Grosvenor Square. His business visits always ended in the drawing-room, where Falconer noted with seeming content the growing intimacy of his guest and daughter.

A light gradually dawned upon even Mrs. Mason's opaque understanding, for she intermitted by degrees her dragon vigilance, and upon one pretext or another joined Falconer in the library.

Upon one of these occasions of a long evening spent without surveillance in Sylvia's company, Zach lingered over his leave-taking.

He held longer than needful the little hand given

him with the farewell greeting, fumbling the while in his waistcoat pocket.

"What have you there?" asked the owner of the little hand unsuspectingly.

"Something for you," with a twitching of the corners of the mouth.

"What can it be? I am consumed with curiosity."

"You shall see presently," attempting to adjust something upon her hand.

"A ring!—for me? You saucy man!" snatching away her hand.

"You will not have it?"

"Certainly not. Why should I have a ring?" with a tell-tale flush.

"Because it is time."

"Time?" with a clumsy attempt at innocence.

"Yes, long ago. Give me your hand!"

"Really, sir! upon my honor!"

"Your hand, I say," peremptorily.

"Not I!—a ring? Why that means"—

"Yes."

"But we are not."

"Not!"

"Certainly not."

"And you refuse?" glooming up.

"How can I refuse, when I have never been asked?"

"And you never will be asked."

As the defiant little person was gathering herself for a reply, she was caught up in a smothering embrace.

"You bold, rude man! Put me down this minute! I never will" —

"Won't you — won't you, indeed? — you can't help yourself! It makes no difference whether you will or not" — another rudeness. "Give me that hand, I say! Your consent is taken for granted."

"I will call papa."

"Do, and Mrs. Mason, and the servants! Let us have the whole household, and the neighbors to boot, and I will publish to the world what a rebellious little tease" —

"Sh — somebody is coming!"

"Will you give me the hand?"

"There!"

The ring was fitted on at last, not without other and repeated rudenesses.

"But what need had I of another ring?"

"Another?"

"Certainly. I have one already."

"Whose?" with an Othello look.

"See!" extending her hand.

"A stone set in brilliants!" with a deepening Moorish expression.

"Which a rude, passionate, ill-bred person once threw out of the window" —

"The pink pearl!"

The incident closed with a demonstration more significant than words.

Next day Sylvia told her father the news. She beat about the bush a long time, and led up to the subject with infinite tact, to make the shock as

gentle as possible. Glancing up by chance, when after much hemming and hawing she came at last to the announcement, she found him regarding her with a look of quiet amusement.

Directly, she burst into tears, and when her father would have consoled her, lapsed into a fit of hysterical laughter.

When the news was given to the public, it was made the occasion for a round of congratulations and small festivities, in the course of which Zach was duly presented to the large circle of Sylvia's friends and acquaintances. Certain evidences that he had sustained this ordeal with credit filled the measure of Zach's content. It would be useless and disingenuous to deny that one of the lifelong aims of his ambition had herein found fulfillment.

He was now, as a matter of course, included in all the family invitations, and the affianced pair, as it chanced, made their first public appearance after the betrothal at a rout given by the Earl of Westmoreland, one of their neighbors in the Square.

A great throng of the foremost persons in all London filled the rooms. The uniforms, orders, and insignia worn by the men, impressive as they were, paled before the bravery of the women, whose widespreading hoops, towering headdresses glittering with jewels and topped with ostrich plumes all nodding, waving, and catching the light from a myriad of wax candles, combined to form a scene of unimaginable splendor.

Obliged for appearances' sake to relinquish Sylvia during the dance, Zach stood looking about,

at a loss what to do, when his attention was attracted by a commotion in the corner of the room, where a crowd had gathered about some unseen object of interest.

Pushing his way to the front, he stood amazed: there, surrounded by the rank and fashion of London, stood Malee!

No canon of good breeding sufficed to keep those so-called gentlefolks from hemming in and staring at the solitary stranger. On the other hand, it must be confessed, Malee sustained the ordeal with admirable composure. Neither abashed nor resentful, she returned the universal stare of curiosity with a look of serene indifference.

Romantic stories concerning her birth, her adventures, and her sufferings had been for some days flying about in society, which, coupled with her striking personal characteristics, combined to render her an object of irrepressible interest.

With a look of undisguised admiration, Zach regarded his old friend. Her beauty suffered not a whit in this perilous contrast with the belles of the drawing-room. Happily, some cunning tire-woman had presided at her toilet, and given due emphasis to all her points. A dress of yellow satin fell in shining folds about her hoopless figure, an Indian crepe shawl of the same color was twisted negligently about her shoulders, strings of amber encircled her throat, while a broad gold band about her head held in place the heavy braids of her coarse black hair.

Stepping forward at once, Zach held out his

hand. Directly, as if by magic, a change took place in the cold, half defiant bearing of the Indian girl. Her cheek flushed, her eye brightened, her figure relaxed. She took, with a shamefaced look, the extended hand, and in answer to Zach's eager questions as to her welfare, dropped her eyes and bashfully toyed with the folds of her gown.

"How came you here, Malee?"

"By the ship over the great water."

"Yes, I know, but," he proceeded, with frontier bluntness, "what errand brought you so far from home?"

A deeper flush, for a minute, swept over the girl's face; there was an evident struggle, too, against the prevaricating instinct of her race, but her answer, when it came, was honest and simple.

"Malee, too, have secrets."

Her cross-examiner looked rebuked.

"I thought—I hoped," he stammered, "your father's friends here had heard of your troubles and had sent for you."

Malee shook her head.

"And have they done nothing for you?"

"They do good deal. They give me this," picking up her gown. "They give me much to eat and drink. They give me soft words and good counsel. They good friends."

"Have you told your story? Have you told of your father's cruel death at the hands of those butch—"

A sudden remembrance of his official position doubtless caused him to leave the sentence unfinished.

"I mean," he went on after a little, "if you make known to these good friends the trials and losses you suffered from the war, they may do something to make it good to you."

Malee did not answer, and from her face it was impossible to say how she received the suggestion.

"You will be here how long? — good many days? good many weeks?"

His question being quietly ignored, the questioner hastened to explain.

"Because I, too, have friends here. I may help you. I will try."

Again the girl's face softened in a marked manner, and she murmured, —

"I thank you."

"Where are your lodgings?"

Malee looked blank.

"Where do you eat and sleep?"

"I not know; they bring me here, they take me away."

Zach looked perplexed. Before he could continue his inquiries a voice near at hand cried, —

"Ah, runaway, here you are, at last!"

He turned, and saw Sylvia on the arm of her cousin, a young lieutenant in the guards.

"Yes; I came across the room to speak to my old friend" —

"You mean the Indian princess?" broke in Sylvia breathlessly. "Oh, pray introduce us! Everybody is dying to know her. Does she speak English?"

"Sh-h!" hissed Zach softly. "She has the ears

of a lynx. She does speak English, and I will introduce you at once."

The lieutenant, being engaged for the next dance, excused himself and hurried away. Whereupon, Zach, turning with a little air of constraint, said, —

"Malee, this is another good friend of mine, Miss Sylvia Falconer, — a friend," he added, with a marked emphasis, "whom I have known a great many years; longer, even, than I have known you."

A contraction as from a freezing draught came over the Indian's whole person; her facial lines moved ominously downward, and she received with an unresponsive air Sylvia's cordial greeting, —

"I have heard a great deal of you, Malee. I have had a great desire to see you. Mr. Phips has told me of the brave and noble service you rendered him. He will never forget. I am glad to have an opportunity to thank you, both for his sake and for my own."

Sylvia spoke with enthusiasm, holding, as she talked, the limp hand of the Indian girl, who suffered without returning the pressure.

"You have come a long way to visit England?"

Malee nodded.

"I suppose it seems strange to you; it did to me when I first came. But you will like the people better when you come to know them. The country, too, when you get away from this noisy, smoky town, is delightful. There are no grand, wild forests, to be sure, such as you have in Florida, but there are beautiful meadows and moors and hills and parks."

Unobservant, as it seemed, of the cold, unanswering mood of the stranger, Sylvia prattled on,—

“I hope you will come to see me before you go away. I live close by in the Square, the very next door to Lord Westmoreland. Perhaps Zach — perhaps Mr. Phips will come, too, and so you may have an opportunity to talk over your old life in the forest.”

Getting restive at this prolonged interview, Zach made a pretext for dragging Sylvia away, turning back for a moment to whisper, —

“I saw you the other day in the park, Malee. Come there again to-morrow, I want to have a word with you!”

Hearing without assenting, Malee followed with a curious, intent look the happy pair as they moved away.

Later in the evening Zach caught another glimpse of his old friend leaning against one of the pillars supporting the arched entrance to the ball-room. He paused to study anew the supple grace of her person as, unconscious of observation, she stood watching the dancers.

From wandering listlessly over the room, her gaze presently became fixed. It acquired a marked intensity, while her figure, half-hidden by the column, had a curious suggestion of a crouching panther, — silent, tireless, alert.

Following the direction of her eyes, Zach’s look of idle curiosity gave place to one of alarm.

Hurrying across the room, he took advantage of the first opportunity and persuaded Sylvia to go home.

Having said good-night at her door, he turned back with an afterthought.

"Dearest, did I hear you inviting Malee to visit you?"

"Yes."

"I beg you will not repeat the invitation."

"Why?"

"And if she comes, make some excuse for not seeing her."

"I cannot do that, dear, it would be both unfriendly and uncivil."

"Nevertheless, I beg you to do it."

"How very odd of you — after saving your life and being such a friend to you! What can you mean? She would be grossly affronted."

"I know — I know. But 'tis better to run the risk of that than" —

"Than?" with wondering eyes.

"Than" — hesitating — "than be annoyed with her afterwards."

CHAPTER XXXIII.

NEXT day Zach took care to be in the park at his usual hour for an outing. As he had named no particular place for meeting, he was obliged to explore the whole garden before satisfying himself that Malee was not there.

Having arrived at this conclusion, he threw himself down with an air of irritation, but presently recovered his equanimity upon reflecting that Malee had not promised to come, and that, moreover, in her inexperience of the city, she might easily have gone astray. After waiting, therefore, a reasonable time for her, he slowly strolled back to the house.

Several days afterwards Mr. Rush sent him to show the town to a newly-arrived compatriot. This was one of the routine duties of the private secretary, in which Zach had easily become proficient.

Among the not-to-be-neglected lions every American must see was Sir Benjamin West.

At the studio of the venerable artist, accordingly, Zach duly brought up towards the close of a day's sight-seeing.

As usual, Sir Benjamin received the stranger with cordiality, and Zach, leaving the two to talk, wandered listlessly about the room.

A loud exclamation was presently heard.

Sir Benjamin turned, and beheld the secretary staring open-mouthed at an unfinished painting.

"Who is this?"

"So," answered the artist, gratified by this tribute to his latest effort, "you like that, then? You are right. I flatter myself 't is a fair bit of work, and when I get it done, if I ever do" —

"But who" —

"The model? Why, sir, 't is no other than our fair countrywoman, the Indian princess, the town is so mad about."

"Malee?"

"Some outlandish name of that sort."

"But how came she — came you" —

"Oh, as for that, somebody brought her here, and naturally I could n't resist the temptation. See what a figure! Note the pose of the neck! I plume myself upon that."

"But where is she?"

"Eh?"

"Where does she live?"

"Live? Dear me! I have n't the least notion, — but remark how exactly I have the copper tint of her skin!"

"Is it known what brings her over here?"

"Ah, that, now, I could n't tell you. 'T is a long story, I believe. She lost everything in some war: her father was killed, or something of that sort. They claim to have been allies of the British, who left them to their fate; so now the Whig leaders have taken this one up, and are making all this pother to harass the government."

"But my Lord Westmoreland had her the other night at his rout."

"Of course, a sop thrown to the opposition Cerberus, not to speak of the fact that Lady Westmoreland would have had her in any case as the reigning sensation in London. See the modeling of that left arm. Stand here! This is the better light."

"But is she coming back?"

"To me, you mean? I only wish she might. I need another sitting. One more would do. But she suits herself, that one; she is as capricious as the wind, and has no more respect for art than a raccoon. You would n't believe, now, my dear Phips, but she has never condescended to cast an eye upon that sketch since 't was begun."

"If she does come again" —

"Ah, but she won't, she won't! Not a bit of it. I know her well. She thinks it slow business, I assure you; and I had to use all my wiles to keep her, the last time."

"You may see her, however, elsewhere."

"Possibly. This bit here, now, in the background, makes you almost smell the forest, eh?"

"Or it may come to your ears where she is staying?"

"I dare say."

"If so, I beg you to send me word at once."

"That I will, — trust me, — if I don't forget it."

"I shall be greatly obliged."

"Spare your thanks till they are earned, and don't count upon me! My memory is a wreck, and

my wits go wool-gathering these days. Mark you that cheek-bone, boy; it has the true aboriginal turn, eh?"

"I make the point because the girl has been a great sufferer. I know something of her history, and may be able to help her. You say the Whig leaders have taken up her cause?"

"Ay, and had her up before a committee of the House the other day, to hear her tell of the murderous doings of that wild, roaring Jibbenainosay of ours yonder in the Floridas."

With a truly diplomatic presence of mind, Zach looked as blank as the side of a house.

"Right, lad, right!" chuckled the shrewd old man. "You know nothing of all that! You never heard the name of a certain Andrew Jackson, whom between ourselves, as good Americans, I think equal parts ignoramus and madman. But what matters that, so long as the dear States reap the advantage of his ill-doings, eh?"

"And Malee was had before the Commons, you say?"

"Tush, not so loud! 'T is in a measure a state secret, which I heard last night at a banquet at my Lord Castlereagh's."

"And she testified?"

"That she did, with a gusto which has thrown the whole cabinet into a panic."

Suppressing a blasphemous exclamation, Zach asked, —

"Is it known what she said?"

"Yes — no; I cannot say; only 't is said her

eyes flashed fire, and she flung about her arms in fine tragic style, worthy dear Siddons herself."

A deepening cloud settled upon the listener's face, and he cast a nervous glance towards his countryman, who was busy with the pictures at the other end of the room.

"But the dusky princess has a truly royal strain," went on Sir Benjamin. "'T is said she rejects with disdain the money the Whigs had such toil in raising for her, which has set everybody to speculating what can have brought her so far over the sea."

The young secretary did not answer, but after several minutes of silence, he made some excuse to go, leaving his companion to visit with Sir Benjamin.

He went away with a look of preoccupation. There was, indeed, no lack of matter to engage his attention. In the existing excitement of the public over the Seminole War, Malee's testimony was in the highest degree calculated to revive the popular wrath, which had already begun to subside. In a renewal of the discussion, his own name might be drawn in, and his position and future imperiled. Far from being insensible to these ignoble considerations, the young diplomat showed himself very much alive to them. There is good ground for belief, indeed, that he dwelt upon this aspect of the case with no inconsiderable dismay.

Nor were his fears without warrant. The waning interest in the subject was not only revived, but the public anger was still further aroused by news

that the American Congress, instead of censuring General Jackson for his lawless doings, had scarcely stopped short of applauding them, and that Mr. Adams, the Secretary of State, had stoutly justified the whole proceeding.

At this juncture, unhappily for the administration, came news of the cession of the Floridas to the United States. Thereupon the press raised a prodigious clamor, and there was a consequent depression in the public funds.

It was well for Mr. Rush that the administration faction had plenty of backbone, for those were anxious days at the American embassy, and a tag of conversation which Zach took home from an evening party proved a genuine crumb of comfort.

Two guests were discussing the probability of war.

"But here comes the duke. Let's take his opinion!"

"Tell us, your Grace," to a little old man with stooping shoulders who was passing, "what is the prospect of a war?"

"With whom?" The assumption of innocence was vastly effective.

"With these obstreperous States."

"There is no prospect," returned the old man, with cold tranquillity, "that two nations with so much common sense as the English and Americans will ever go to war upon a pretext so trivial."

"Who was that?" asked Zach, impressed by the power in the speaker's beaked nose and cold gray eyes.

"The Duke of Wellington!"

Grave matters of state had thus monopolized for many weeks the young secretary's time and attention, when a slight incident reminded him that his life had other interests.

Going home at a late hour one night, from some business engagement, he saw a shawled figure slip stealthily from an area opposite Mr. Rush's house, and glide away among the shadows of the ill-lighted street. At first scarcely heeding the circumstance, it presently flashed upon him that there had been something familiar in the form or carriage of the fugitive.

Directly, he gave chase. Running to the end of the street, he returned, peering into every area or shadowy embrasure, calling coaxingly,—

"Malee, Malee!"

But not even an echo broke the midnight silence.

For a coincidence, next day on going to Grosvenor Square, Sylvia greeted him with—

"What do you think? I've seen your friend, what's-her-name, the Indian princess again!"

"Where?" with an assumption of indifference.

"Here, in our own square."

"When?"

"Yesterday, — no, — the day before. I was sitting at the window when I saw a strange, foreign-looking woman with a shawl over her head sauntering aimlessly about among the shrubbery in the square. I scarcely heeded her, and of course attached no significance to it."

"Certainly not."

"Next day, about the same hour in the morning, I was sitting again at the window, looking for papa to return from his drive, when I saw a flutter of garments behind the statue."

"Pure fancy!" interjected the listener, with a nervous laugh.

"Listen! That afternoon Mason and I went to drive. Returning about dusk, I saw the woman going before us down the square, and this time, thinking herself unobserved, she slipped into that little clump of haws just opposite our door. I drove past, affecting not to notice her presence, but went into the house, and through the closed shutters examined her with my opera glass, and made up my mind that for some purpose she is watching this house!"

"Pooh, pooh!" exclaimed Zach, with ill-assumed indifference. "What should she be watching your house for?"

"That 's the mystery."

"No mystery at all. 'T is a common beggar doing the square for cold victuals."

"Wait! I am not through! As soon as I made up my mind it was this house she was interested in, I sent a man across to speak to her."

"How could you be so rash?"

"When she saw him coming, she sprang up and hurried away. I saw her face distinctly, and recognized the Indian. She is not one to be forgotten. And now, if she comes again I shall go and speak to her myself."

"God forbid!"

Sylvia stared in amazement at the explosive interruption.

"Whatever you do, darling, keep out of her way!"

"But why? Have you not told me again and again that she is one of your most faithful friends, that she has had great trials, that she is poor and friendless?"

"Yes, yes; that is true; but all the same, I charge you — I charge you," he repeated, with a solemn and almost tragic emphasis, "on no account go near her!"

"Mercy upon us! You are enough to scare one! Why should n't I go near her? She cannot intend me any harm. Besides, she may feel homesick and wretched. She may be pining for a kind word, poor creature!"

"I know; I am mindful of all that, and I feel a profound pity for her. I will do anything I can for her myself, but for you it is another thing. Remember, she is a savage, a creature of impulse and passion, and not to be judged by the standards of civilization."

Reflection upon the subject seemed only to increase Zach's apprehensions, for when he came to say good-night, he begged Sylvia to forbear for the present her walking and horseback exercise, and on no account to venture out of the house unattended.

But a spoiled child is not reformed in a moment. Accustomed all her life to follow her own caprices, Sylvia laughed at Zach's fears and warnings, and accordingly, several days afterwards, when on re-

turning from a drive she again caught sight of Malee loitering in the square, she jumped from the carriage and boldly accosted her.

“Is that you, Malee? I have been hoping to meet you. Will you come home with me? I want to see you.”

Disconcerted by the unexpected meeting, Malee made no answer.

“Come,” repeated Sylvia, graciously putting forth her hand. “I want to be friends with you. I am sure you have not many friends here.”

Neglecting to take the proffered hand, the Indian yet, after a moment’s hesitation, silently followed her new acquaintance home.

Shown into the drawing-room, she refused to be seated, but standing bolt upright by the fireside gazed with unwinking attention at her hostess.

“Pray sit down! you must be tired. I hope you are getting to feel like home in London. It must seem a dismal place after the beautiful wilderness, of course. I love the forest, too, but I should get lonely there. I am used to men and women, and I like better to be with them.”

The strange guest made no answer, nor showed by any sign of approval or dissent how she received this overture.

With admirable ease and friendliness, as if she had the most sympathetic auditor in the world, Sylvia went on, —

“I hope you are succeeding in your mission to this country. Zach—I mean Mr. Phips—has told me of the trials and hardships you have suffered.

He often speaks of you, and wishes he might help you."

A perceptible narrowing of the eyes and tightening of the lips took place in the listener's face.

"I hope you have found other friends to help and care for you. Mr. Phips, I am sure, will come and see you, if you tell me where you may be found."

There was a convulsive movement, as of swallowing, in Malee's throat, but she did not speak.

"Will you not leave word where he may find you?"

"No."

"He would take great pleasure in helping you."

"Speak not to him," said the Indian sternly.

"Let *me*, then, serve you! Tell me what I can do for you."

"Nothing."

As she spoke, Malee made a movement towards the door.

"You are going? Why are you in such haste? Will you not stay and eat with us?"

The Indian shook her head.

"But you must not go alone. It is quite dark. I will send you home in the carriage."

"I have no home."

"To your friends, then, wherever you are staying."

"I have no friends."

"But you will leave some word for Mr. Phips?"

"He come to see you here?" asked the Indian, suddenly, with glittering eyes.

"Yes, and I will tell him that I have seen you."

Again the movement was seen in the girl's throat. She was silent for a minute, and then hoarsely said, —

"Tell him nothing."

The door opened and shut, and she was gone.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

ZACH was expected to dinner that evening in Grosvenor Square, and as he approached the house saw a shawled figure issue from the door and pause a moment upon the step, as if in doubt which way to turn. It looked like a woman, but there was not light enough to be certain. As he drew nearer, the figure started, and fled away down the street.

He stopped short. The truth flashed upon him. He tried to rush forward, but could not. His knees grew limp, and he was fain to clutch the nearest railing.

A servant came out to light the lantern above the Falconers' door. The man's manner, so quiet and perfunctory, reassured him. There was, then, no occasion for alarm.

His fears put to rest, he yielded to an irresistible inclination to follow the fugitive. Hurrying to the corner of the street, he saw afar off the draped figure melting into indistinctness among the gathering shadows.

Resolved that she should not again escape him, he dashed after at full speed. With the fleetness of her race, however, she steadily maintained her lead, and while the echoing sound of his boots warned her of his pursuit, her moccasined feet fell like snowflakes on the pavement.

Following on at unslackened pace, Zach soon found himself in a poorer quarter of the town. The pavements became rough and irregular, the street-lamps dimmer and farther apart.

Meantime, for many minutes he had seen nothing of Malee. Not impossibly she had doubled on him; it was an old trick of Indian runners.

Stopping at last upon the corner of two narrow streets, he lighted a match and looked about. The feeble point of light served only to make the darkness more obscure. He listened, but heard nothing save the hoarse, ceaseless roar from the heart of the town.

Convinced, however, that the fugitive had passed that way, he boldly plunged down the narrowest and darkest of the streets. He found it not only dark and narrow, but unpaved and abounding in noxious stench. He kept on at a steady pace, for uncounted minutes. In the comparative stillness he presently was sensible of a noise, — a noise not loud, but unusual. He stopped and listened. It sounded like the heavy tread of men walking in unison. It was, moreover, plainly coming in his direction.

Fearful of being stopped and questioned by this night-patrol, he slipped into the shadow of a tumble-down old stable which stood withdrawn from the street.

Hardly was he ensconced here, when the paraders arrived, and greatly to his consternation halted directly before his hiding-place. He slunk down a blind passage beside the stable, and waited in needless trepidation. The strangers were too intent

upon their own purpose to heed him. What was their purpose? He could not divine. He could only follow their movements with breathless interest as, after a muttered conference, they stealthily approached the stable door.

Hereupon, somebody inside evidently took alarm, for a light, which had been shining through certain cracks and knot-holes of the old building, suddenly went out.

Arrived at the door the new-comers paused again for a moment, and then with one accord threw themselves upon the rickety barrier and burst their way into the building.

Directly, there was a tumult of oaths, threats, and curses, interspersed by one or two pistol-shots, while high above all resounded cries for help.

Unheeding all dictates of prudence, Zach answered the appeal. Reaching the stable door, he collided with several men escaping from the building.

Upset by the shock, he struggled to his feet, and prompted by the cries from within seized upon the hindmost fugitive, a sturdy and desperate fellow, who, turning quickly, dealt his unarmed captor a blow with the butt of a horse-pistol which felled him to the ground.

Incapable, henceforth, of any clear and connected perception of what took place, the sufferer had nevertheless confused impressions of a crowd coming forth from the stable, some with dark lanterns, some handcuffed and dragged as prisoners, and all disappearing in the darkness like a disorderly mob.

Left thus unconscious and disabled upon the

ground, the involuntary witness of the midnight affray would doubtless have found it a poor consolation to know that he had taken part in an historical incident which was destined to startle the civilized world, and make a very telling paragraph in the humdrum annals of the prince regent's administration.

When, after an interval, he never knew how long, the witness awoke to a blurred and pain-racked perception of things about him, he had much ado to make himself out.

This first half consciousness was followed by divers sleepings and wakings, accompanied by visions more or less impossible and incongruous. He was dimly aware that his surroundings, although not squalid, were in the last degree humble. Again he was conscious of being studiously cared for; it even seemed at times that he was caressed by a familiar hand; and once he fancied that he had seen Malee's face bending close above him, her proud eyes softened with anxiety and tenderness.

At last, like the brushing away of a cobweb, all this confusion and uncertainty vanished. He awoke with clear head and undimmed vision. But a new bewilderment awaited him. Although he saw plainly the objects about him, he did not recognize them. Where was he? and how came he there?

Little by little he went back and knitted up the raveled sleeve of memory. Vividly enough he recalled the pursuit of Malee, but that was ages ago. Then came remembrances of the patrol, the stable, the cries for help, the struggle, the blow.

Opportunely, a strange woman entered at this point, who proved to be the landlady of his humble lodgings, — a vulgar but not unkindly body, who was only too glad to talk.

She easily supplemented his remembrances by saying that he had been brought there in a senseless condition by a foreign-looking woman with the strength of a man, for she had carried him with ease in her arms; that this foreign person, moreover, had shown herself very close-mouthed and none too civil, for she would condescend to make no explanations save that her patient was a person of rank, and that the greatest care and attention must be shown him. She furthermore confessed that the strange young woman had shown great concern for her patient, for whom, however, she would not hear of calling a physician, but had dressed his wound with some lotion of her own.

“Altogether,” concluded the good woman, “I cawn’t at all make her out, an ’ave no liking for ’er looks, and ’ad made up me mind to tel the ’ole story to yer honor so soon as ever yer honor come to ’is wits.”

“She is in the house now?” asked the patient eagerly.

“Never a bit!”

“When was she here last?”

“This very day; early in the morning.”

“Did she say anything about coming back?”

“Not she. But there ’s little need; she ’s sure to be ’ere to-morrow at some hour to suit ’erself.”

“How long have I been here?”

"Eight and forty hours, or the matter of that."

"What time of day is it?"

"Four o'clock and after. I know by St. Giles's bells, which sounded two hours an' more ago."

The patient paused and considered a space, breaking out presently with an appearance of energy and impatience.

"Go at once, my good woman, and order me a carriage!"

"Your honor never thinks of going without seeing 'er?"

"Yes, yes, I cannot wait."

"She might murder me — that one!"

"Pooh! go fetch me pen and paper, and I will write her a letter."

"A letter to 'er, an 'ow, tell me, 'll she ever get the sense o't?"

"Never fear! she can read well enough."

"An 'eathen like 'er read! God 'elp us! 't is more than I can do meself. I'm but a poor scholar at books, though I can make me mark with the best o' 'em. But think ye the letter will satisfy 'er?"

"It must."

"I 'ope it may, with all me 'art, for I'm free to say I'm scared o' the creature. But I'll fetch the writin' things, since 't is your honor's bidding, for a man come back to 'is senses is not to be gainsaid."

Taking advantage of the good woman's absence from the room, Zach got up and dressed, feeling still a little unsettled and giddy.

"'Ere they are, such as they be," exclaimed the

landlady, bouncing in with the writing materials. " 'Tis none o' the best, that pen, but ye may make shift to mark with it if ye bear a thought to the right, and for the ink, I 'ave added a drop o' vinegar."

"Very well; and now, my good friend, while I am writing the letter, make haste and go for the carriage!"

"That will I, never fear, for fair spoken and civil as ye be, I 'll make no secret to yer honor I shall be relieved to 'ave me 'ouse well quit o' ye."

"How is that?"

"The neighbors are making trouble, if ye must know, sir; and to be round wi' ye," fixing a suspicious glance on her wondering lodger, "'t is thought ye 'ad an 'and in it yerself."

"A hand in what?"

"The great conspiracy."

"What is that?"

"So much the better, if ye be as innocent as ye look!"

"Speak out, woman," cried the lodger impatiently, "what are you talking about?"

"W'y, sir, if ye must 'ave it, 't was the very night ye were brought 'ere, and 't was that gave it the ugly look, — a bloody plot was brought to light to murder all the government lords w'ile they sat at dinner. But the truth leaked out, and the wretches were caught, as they waited yonder in an old stable" —

"Eh, stable — er — wh-where was that?"

"Yonder in Cato Street, through the alley and

round two corners, not a stone's throw away. But some o' the rascals escaped, though there 's strong 'opes they will be caught, and that all will 'ang for it."

Moved by this strange intelligence, and mindful of the anxiety which his prolonged absence from home must have caused, the patient jumped up and staggered around the room in an agitation so extreme as to excite anew the attention of his already suspicious landlady.

Perceiving this, he presently sat down, and mustering his self-control, said with the evident purpose of quieting the woman's very natural doubts as to his character, —

"Stay, my good woman! I 've changed my mind! Instead of going for a cab, as I bade you, send somebody to my residence in Baker Street, and bid them send a servant and a carriage forthwith to take me home. Wait! I'll write a word, that they may know the message is from me!"

Scribbling two or three lines on a visiting-card, he tossed it to the relieved woman, who, with confidence now in some measure restored, showed due alacrity in obeying his orders.

Within two hours the carriage was at the door, and the patient was helped into it, having first intrusted to the landlady's care a letter for Malee and discharged with fitting liberality the charges for his accommodation.

Arrived in Baker Street, he found that the family, in their alarm over his mysterious disappearance, had already consulted the police and sent word to

Grosvenor Square. In answer to his own eager questions, he received full confirmation of the landlady's strange tale of the conspiracy.

The Cato Street plot was, indeed, the talk of the town. Failure doomed it to the rank of a nine-days' wonder, whereas its success might have been blazoned in many a heavy historical chapter of after-event prescience and philosophy.

Zach briefly explained to Mr. Rush his own involuntary part in the affair, which was duly communicated to Lord Harrowby, to be used, if needed, as corroborative evidence in the trial of the culprits.

Having duly accounted for himself in Baker Street, Zach made the best of his way to Grosvenor Square. The state of suspense in that household over his unexplained absence may be surmised from the fact that Sylvia swooned in his arms, while the shock of his sudden reappearance induced in Falconer a recurrence of his old symptoms.

In the course of the evening Sylvia confided to her lover that of late her father had not been so well, and the physician accordingly had ordered a change of air.

"Where will he go?"

"To Bath."

"And you will go with him?"

"Certainly."

To the immense surprise of his betrothed, Zach drew a long, deep breath of relief.

Pondering this matter as he went homeward, something prompted him to go out of his way to stop at his late humble lodgings in Edgeware Road.

Arriving, he asked the woman if his letter had been delivered. Learning that Malee had not yet returned, he slipped a gold piece into the woman's hand, and bade her, when next the Indian girl appeared, to have her privately followed and report to him her whereabouts.

Deeply preoccupied with his own affairs, Zach was yet not wholly oblivious, as he jolted homeward in his cab, of a certain movement about him, a stir, as it were, in the air, a mysterious happening, as of a passing shadow, which affected the weal of the great populace swarming past and around him. Seeing no act done nor hearing any word spoken confirmatory of this vague impression, it gained no lodgment in his mind, and failed to draw his attention from more absorbing topics.

In the night, however, this routed impression returned, and his sleep was disturbed by hoarse murmurs and distant cheering of the populace, and by the faint and solemn tolling of bells.

Next morning, what with want of sleep and the over-excitement and fatigue of the day before, he had perforce to keep his bed.

Presenting himself for work the succeeding day, he was surprised to see Mr. Rush appear in a singular toilet, namely, a suit of black cloth, without buttons on sleeves or pockets, a long lawn cravat and weeper, chamois shoes and gloves, crape hat-band, black sword and buckles.

The tolling bells were explained: all the world was in mourning for King George the Third. That worst enemy of England and best friend of

America, but for whose inspired stupidity it is not too much to say the United States might be still a dependency of the British crown, was dead.

In the excitement attendant upon the royal obsequies and the accession of a new sovereign, the American minister and his household were necessarily more or less involved. Thus some days, filled mainly with ceremonial detail, followed, in which Zach almost forgot the incident of the Cato Street tragedy. It was sharply and unpleasantly recalled to mind by a summons to appear and testify at the trial of the culprits.

It was a fit morning for such business. The air was raw and chill. The streets were foul with mud. A thick fog weighed like a leaden pall upon the city, and, notwithstanding the street-lamps were lighted, men groped like ghosts through the murky thoroughfares and byways.

Stumbling along in the wake of a link-boy, Zach came at last to the court-house, — the renowned Old Bailey.

Gazing up for a moment at its frowning façade half lost in the fog, he passed shivering in through the black hole of entrance. Thence, hemmed in by a rough and sordid crowd, he was borne along to the court-room.

The spacious hall, disfigured by age and hard usage, had yet a grimy impressiveness. A blaze of lights about the bench drove the fog for the time being into the corners. About the walls, oozing with moisture, Zach spelled out in the pale, half light warning and ominous texts, —

“A false witness shall not go unpunished, and he that speaketh lies shall perish.”

“Ye shall not swear by my name falsely, neither shalt thou profane the name of thy God.”

“If a false witness rise up against any man to testify against him that which is wrong, then thou shalt do unto him as he had thought to do unto his brother.”

The crier bawled some unintelligible lingo. Up out of the thick outer fog his Honor appeared, in the grim majesty of gown and wig. The trial began. The lawyers, flinging about their black robes, looked like enormous bats. They wrangled with each other; they bullied the witnesses, with the apparent approval of the bench. His Honor, anon rising in foggy voluminousness, charged the awe-struck jury with fatal clearness and significance.

The jury disappeared in the fog, and came back in ten minutes with a verdict of guilty; whereupon five of the culprits were sentenced to be hanged.

Appalled by the swiftness and tragic result of the procedure, Zach fought his way to the outer air through the rank multitude waiting to batten on further horrors.

Reaching home, he found a messenger awaiting him, an ill-conditioned fellow, who emerged from a dark corner of the hall, and approaching said in a mysterious whisper,—

“I found her.”

“Eh?”

“Beant you the gent was in Edgeware Road?”

“Yes.”

“Come along o’ me, then.”

“What do you mean?”

“The neger-woman, — I found ’er for ye. I tracked ’er ’ome, but ’f ye want to see ’er, come quick, for I mistrust she ’s on the go!”

CHAPTER XXXV.

"SHE goes it like a race'orse, that un, she does! Blest if I 'ad n't to run to keep hup vith 'er, an' she never pulls hup till Temple Bar, ven she stops for a go at the letter, an' I 'ad a chance to get me vind."

"She read the letter, then?"

"That did she, hover an' hover, till she 'ad it be 'art, you 'd think; then folds it hup in a rag, an' tucks it hinto 'er bosom."

"And then" —

"Then away she goes agin like mad, an' I close on 'er 'eels be'ind like a fox'ound."

"And you found where she lives?"

"Never trust me, if I did n't! I tracked 'er down at last, an' a rum 'ole it is, I can tell ye."

"Bad, was it?"

"Bad for a dog it vas, leave alone o' a Chrestian, not that this 'ere is rightly a Chrestian."

"And when you got there" —

"On me vord, but I thought we never vould get anyv'eres, but of a suddint she stops short an' squats 'er down on the ground in front o' a 'ouse."

"And you" —

"I dodges down a passage an' keeps me hi on 'er, ven I 'll be 'anged if she does n't pull hout that 'ere letter an' at it agin."

“Well?”

“By an’ by she starts hup an’ clutches a holt o’ ’er frock an’ stares round in a vay she was goin’ to speak, ven along comes a cove an’ squints at ’er, an’ she darts hinto the ’ouse like a rabbit.”

This talk between Zach and the messenger was interrupted by the arrival of the carriage which had been sent for.

It took them a half hour and more to reach their destination, — a wretched tenement house in one of the worst parts of the town.

It was not only a new phase of London to the astonished beholder, it was a new phase of life. It presented an object-lesson of destitution, squalor, and every form of human abasement, which he may well have remembered to the end of his days.

With a sickened look he climbed the rickety outer steps and knocked at a battered door, which, standing half open, revealed an interior foul with dirt and reeking with stenches.

A beery old hag answered the summons, but viewing the stranger with a suspicious eye, disclaimed any knowledge of the object of his search.

A half-crown made her more communicative. After a pretense of reflection, she at last remembered a lodger answering the description of Malee, whom she designated as a stuck-up hussy, who gave herself great airs and would have nothing to say to anybody; who, moreover, was gone for days at a time, the Lord knew where, and when at home walked the floor all night in her leather stockings; who in fine kept no hours, had no habits, and con-

sequently it was quite impossible to say when or where she could be found.

Zach, as may be surmised, drove away in a very uncomfortable frame of mind. Clearly, Malee's fine friends had deserted her, and she must have been driven to desperate straits to hide herself away in these loathsome slums.

Musing in this vein, as they traversed the crowded thoroughfare, blocked from time to time by the press of vehicles, he was presently aroused by a cry from the boy on the box.

"There, there! Look, yer honor! — there she be for ye now!"

Zach gazed eagerly from the carriage-window. There, indeed, on the sidewalk a few yards from him, stood Malee!

Her appearance added the last feather to Zach's load of remorse. The physical glory which had once surrounded her like an atmosphere, the freedom of carriage, the buoyancy of movement, the look of tireless vigor, of affluent vitality, were gone. Gaunt, listless, hollow-eyed, consumed by an inward fever, she wandered like a lost spirit reckless of her course. Draped about her, now soiled and draggled, were the fine gown and shawl in which at Lord Westmoreland's rout she had encountered the fashion of London.

Shocked beyond the power of word or movement, Zach sat for a moment like one paralyzed. It was a moment lost forever. The words of the boy, repeated in a shriller tone, caught the quick ear of the Indian. Her eyes fell upon the carriage and its

occupant, and with a suppressed outcry she darted away amid the throng, and before Zach could reach the sidewalk through the serried vehicles she was lost to sight.

Determined now to take prompt and effective measures for the relief of the unfortunate girl, Zach drove straight to police headquarters, and left a description of her person, with a request to be notified as soon as she was found.

Having thus, as it seemed, done all he could for the time being, he strove by a strenuous application to work and a vigorous attempt at forgetfulness to quiet certain conscientious qualms which persistently associated themselves with the subject.

What made this more difficult was the fact that Sylvia and her father had already gone to Bath. The shutting up of the Grosvenor Square house cut off, in effect, the larger part of his life, and narrowed him down to his somewhat meagre personal resources.

His delight may therefore be readily conceived when, on returning one afternoon from a gloomy drive in the park, he found Sandy awaiting him in the ante-room. A ghost could not have given him a greater surprise.

The skipper, who had thought it necessary, on making so grand a visit, to sacrifice to the proprieties by putting on a linen shirt and a suit of black broadcloth, looked so comically ill at ease that Zach, the greetings over, scrupled not to laugh outright.

“What are you doing in that landlubber rig?” he cried. “Come upstairs, and unharness!”

Seated in the privacy of Zach's room, with coat and cravat discarded and collar thrown back, the skipper was himself again. •

The two regarded each other with undisguised interest.

"And how goes the world, shipmate?" began Zach, drawing up his chair and struggling with a moment's constraint in adjusting himself to the old intimacy.

"Huh!" answered the sailor with a little disparaging grunt, delightful to the eager listener as a vivid reminder of old times. "Go! it don't go; it stands as stock still as 'a balky mule, 'cept for grindin' away at yer flesh an' blood!"

"You at any rate need not complain," continued Zach, recognizing in his companion certain comfortable evidences of health and prosperity.

"Eh?"

"You hold your own, I say."

"The devil! No, I don't; wall, 't ain't much ef I do. Fer looks, I dunno, fer I hain't took a squint in a glass sence I can remember, but I feel older 'n Methusalem, 'n I 'm a-gittin' as creaky in the j'int's as an old windmill."

"Too much living alone; the way to cure that is to get married," suggested Zach, with the positiveness of a recent convert.

"Merried!—I? Thunder! th' ain't nothin' in petticoats so hard put to it fer a pilot that she'd take me aboard."

"Pooh! you never tried."

"Wall, it's true I did n't never what ye may

say sail straight down on anythin', but I've tacked an' jibed 'bout a good many small craft, and I never hed no signals run up fer me yit."

"Never fear! your turn's coming. One of these days, when you get your stocking full"—

"The Lord Harry, Bub! — stockin'? there's too many holes in my stockin' ever to fill up."

"Ho, ho! the old story. Just now there seems to be a hole in your pipe. Here, have another charge. How 'd you come over?—in the 'Malviny'?"

"What, thet little critter? I a'most forgot I ever owned her."

"Got a better one now?"

"Wall, I dunno 'bout thet."

"A three-master, I'll bet."

"Yeah, I b'lieve she hed when I left her."

"Hooray! and you own the whole of her?"

"I s'pose I do, what ther is on her."

"And grumbling about hard luck yet, you unmitigated old growler!"

"'T ain't no gret for luck, Bub; what with bad runs, an' repairs, she costs more 'n she comes to."

Zach laughed and changed the subject.

"When 'd you get in?"

"Made Liverpool a week ago come Tuesday, with a load o' wheat. Left the mate to onload, an' thought I'd"—

"Come and hunt me up."

"Thet's 'bout it."

"The same old hearty as ever," cried Zach jumping up with an old-time impulse and shaking hands over again. "I'm glad to see you, — mighty glad!"

We 'll have a good time. We 'll do whatever you like. By and by, when you get your breath, we 'll go out and see the town."

"I reckon thet ain't no small job. Swear to man, Bub, ef it didn't kind o' take my breath. Didn't seem to be no eend to it, as I come along this mornin'."

"A pretty big town."

"It must take 'bout the whole island," continued Sandy reflectively. "Ther can't be enough left fer more 'n a strip round the aidge to turn in."

Zach laughed, and brought forth from the chimney closet a brandy bottle and some glasses.

"Humph!" sighed the skipper, drawing a long breath of satisfaction after his dram. "I dunno whether it's the rum, Bub, or 'cause I'm gittin' ye focused, but ye 're jest beginnin' to look a leetle grain as ye used ter."

"Did you find me changed?"

"Lord's massy! ther war n't nothin' 't all to go by, fust off, but it's a-comin' back, now."

"What's the matter?" asked Zach, with an amused look.

"Wall, for one thing, ye're a good deal more spindlin' 'n ye used ter be; then yer gittin' a kind o' drawed look 'bout the mouth, as ef ye was all the time a-contrivin' an' a-schemin'."

The listener laughed uneasily.

"Things goin' all right, I hope?"

"First rate."

"Didn't know but mebbe you was a leetle down in the mouth 'bout sunthin'."

“Oh, no.”

“No chance o’ yer ever comin’ back to the States, I s’pose?”

“Not very soon, I fear.”

The skipper knocked the ashes out of his pipe and charged it again in silence, giving the fruit of his minute’s reflection as he threw the charred match on the floor.

“Wall, Bub, this ’ere ’s mebbe all right fer your kind o’ business, but fer a place to live in, for what ye may call a country,—why, hang it! ’t ain’t a country,—it’s nothin’ but an island, with more fokes to the square inch,—wall I can’t think o’ nothin’ but flies on a spot o’ merlasses. Ye may laugh as much as ye like, but I swear, I feel kind o’ hoggish breathin’ all the air I need, fer fear I ’m gittin’ more ’n my share.”

This truly American criticism drew from Zach a loud laugh, as he refilled his friend’s glass. Their further conversation was, however, interrupted by a call from Mr. Rush for his secretary, and the two accordingly separated with an engagement to spend the evening together.

During the skipper’s visit of two or three days in London, Zach devoted much time to his old friend, and wound up by promising to run down to Liverpool and give him a send-off when his ship was ready to sail.

Reviewing the many pleasant incidents of the visit on the night of Sandy’s departure, Zach was struck by a happy thought. He started to his feet, and walked about the room with a look of agitation.

Why not get the skipper to take Malee home to America? He would look out for her comfort, and contrive to have her taken back to her kindred. With his mind full of the project, the secretary went to bed.

Next day, however, a new and more engrossing subject for thought came to claim his attention.

As Mr. Rush was going over his morning's mail, he read out as an item of passing interest that the post of United States secretary of legation at St. Petersburg was vacant.

Absorbed in his dispatches, the unsuspecting minister did not notice what a sensation his announcement had made. Indeed, he had quite forgotten the matter, when, a few hours later, Zach, with a flushed face, but a sufficiently resolute tone, appeared before him, and after a little hemming and hawing, announced himself as a candidate for the vacant place.

As his world-wise superior showed no surprise and made no comment, the secretary, with a deepening flush, demanded his opinion upon the matter.

"There are only two things against it that I can see," answered the minister quietly, "two important but not insuperable objections; that is to say, youth and inexperience."

The secretary looked at once abashed and encouraged.

"Would you be willing, sir, to say so much in my behalf?" faltered the undiscouraged aspirant.

"I will cheerfully say that and much more."

"Thank you very much; and what do you think

is the best way to go to work to secure the position?"

"The most straightforward way possible. Write at once to Mr. Adams, applying for it, and then lose no time in going over to support your petition in person."

"Will it, then, be necessary for me to go to America?"

"It will be advisable; with Mr. Adams a half hour's talk will avail more than a ream of correspondence."

"But if the President" —

"You will do better to go directly to the Secretary of State in this matter."

"But that will be leaving you short-handed."

"I will manage, and so far as I am concerned, you may set about your preparations at once. It is an opportunity not to be neglected. Your chances of success are, at least, fair. Meantime, I will give you a letter to Mr. Adams."

For some hours Zach's head was in a whirl. He was too excited to think clearly. Next morning, when he had in a measure recovered his self-control, he wrote two letters, one to Sylvia, advising her of his proposed voyage and its object, the other to Sandy, asking his date of sailing and announcing himself and Malee as possible passengers.

By return of mail came a note from Sylvia, imploring him to go at once to Bath. As he was about to make the trip of his own motion, he lost no time in accepting the invitation.

To his discomfiture, he found Sylvia greatly

stirred up over the news. She was strongly against the whole project. She detested St. Petersburg, without knowing anything about it. She was content to have him stay in London and remain a private secretary. All his powers of logic failed to convince the specious little malcontent. The discussion between them lasted the whole evening, and she went to bed unreconciled and rebellious.

Left alone with Falconer, Zach renewed the subject. The father proved more reasonable than the daughter. Indeed, he warmly approved the young man's disposition to advance himself. He had, moreover, a word of his own to say. After gazing intently at his companion for some minutes, he broke out, —

“You are twenty-three years old, you say?”

“That was last year.”

“Twenty-four, then, and Sylvia is” —

“Nineteen.”

“Humph! and you may be gone for months in the States?”

“I shall make what haste I can.”

“I know, I know; but such business moves slowly. Then things may happen — obstacles. It must take months, and I” —

The speaker paused, and Zach looked at him inquiringly.

“May go off at any moment.”

“Pray, don't say so, sir! You are growing better every day.”

“Tut, tut! that talk is well enough before her. With you, I can be frank. The truth is,” contin-

ued the invalid, a cloud perceptibly settling over his face, "I am *not* growing better. I am losing ground. Every attack leaves me weaker, and so I repeat, the probability is I shall not live to see your return."

"I do not admit it — I will not recognize it."

"That being so," continued the sick man, unheeding the interruption, "it behooves me to recognize and provide for such an emergency. You and Sylvia have been betrothed — how long?"

"Nearly a year."

"Very good; now, I have been thinking, since you came, that considering the probable length of your absence, considering the precariousness of my health, considering the further fact that upon my death Sylvia will be left without any near relative who might serve as a natural guardian and adviser, that you had better" —

"Better," echoed Zach, breathless with agitation and suspense.

"Get married before you go!"

CHAPTER XXXVI.

It is using very mild language to say that Zach was dumfounded by Falconer's quiet suggestion. He spent the night in a dizzying state of upheaval, during which some strenuous efforts at self-control availed little. He had, perforce, to wait until custom could stale his rapture and bring a seeming phantasm to the focus of commonplace vision.

When his pulses had duly slowed down, however, he recognized the suggestion as worldly wise. There seemed, indeed, but one obstacle in the way of its realization, and this, from a mole-hill, speedily developed into a mountain. Would Sylvia consent?

Betimes next morning he set himself to resolve the doubt. Falconer helped him to an opportunity by going off for his morning's drive, in which Sylvia usually accompanied him.

Left with his betrothed, Zach delayed not to broach the matter.

"Heigho!" he began, with a prodigious sigh. "I shall soon be off, now!"

"To America?"

"Yes."

"Perhaps you may not go; I pray every night that something may happen to hinder."

"If it were only *going*. But I have been thinking what a long, long time I shall be away."

"How long?"

"An eternity."

"A man's or woman's eternity?"

"Both, — months, at least!"

"Oh, I cannot bear it! You shall not go! How I hate this sordid ambition which has lately seized you! Who knows what may happen to you there?"

"I am thinking what may happen to you."

A look of distress passed over her face, and she put her hand to his lips.

"Hush! Don't speak of that! I shut my eyes to everything but the little stretch of the way I daily see before me. I dare not look beyond!"

"That is right for you, darling. You must keep a bright face for him. But I must needs look beyond. I must think of everything which may befall you when I am not here to comfort and protect my little one."

"Think of it if you must, but do not, I beg, speak of it; for if" —

He interrupted her with a caress.

"I speak of it now for a purpose."

"What a terrible word!"

"I have been thinking that, for my sake, for your sake, for everybody's sake, before I go, I ought — we ought to be married!"

"Married!" she repeated breathlessly. "Why, Zach — Wh-what are you thinking of? How can I — what would — Papa would never consent. Oh, 't is impossible!"

"Is it only the thought of him that deters you?"

"Ye-es — I — that is — But 't is so short a time!"

“And do you mind that?”

“No-o, I — but papa would — oh, very decidedly.”

“We can, at least, consult him.”

“It would be of no use.”

“Let us try, at any rate.”

“I know what he will say. He has very old-fashioned prejudices in such things. He would think it scandalous to dispatch so important a matter in such haste. And if he objects, if he shows any hesitation, I beg you, dearest, not to press it upon him. He would only become more fixed in his opinion, and in his present state of health” —

“Fear nothing, my dear; I promise not to urge him.”

But the anxious daughter, fearing lest her lover's ardor might betray him into saying something untimely, took upon herself the delicate task of breaking the startling project to the invalid.

On beholding him, therefore, returned from his drive, and once more comfortably established in his favorite corner, she went and sat on a stool at his feet, and taking one of his hands, opened the conversation miles and miles away from her objective point.

“Papa, I think you look better to-day.”

“So?”

“Yes, the waters must be doing you good.”

“Let us hope so.”

“Perhaps it is the quiet down here that agrees with you.”

“Perhaps.”

“You do not find it too lonely?”

"No; I always have you and Mason, and Phips, when he comes."

"Ye-es — Oh, yes, when Zach comes, of course, it is different; he brings so much news; but I" — hesitating — "I am thinking how different it will be when he is gone" —

"Gone?"

"To America."

"Oh!"

"It will be very soon, now."

"Really?"

"I don't know what we shall do."

"It will be doleful for you, tied down to a sleepy old woman and a sick old man."

"Oh, no, no! I didn't think of that. I am always happy to be near you; but — it is so far away — he will be gone so long, and — and so many things may happen — to him."

"True."

"I — he feels very badly about going."

"Naturally."

"We have been talking about it, and I — he — thinks — that is — says" —

She stopped a moment, took breath, and summoned her resolution.

"Papa dear, I am making dreadful work of this; I have something to tell you."

"Indeed!"

• "Yes, and you must not be shocked or astonished, or let it affect you in any way. It is only one of Zach's wild harum-scarum schemes, — which is too absurd to be thought of, — and I should never in the

world consent to it for a moment, only I — he is so persistent and headstrong — I promised him — just to keep him quiet — that I would speak to you about it, and ” —

“Go on, my child!”

“Why, he ” — she interposed a deprecating little laugh — “he insists that we — he and I — we have been betrothed a long time now, you remember — shall ” —

“Well?”

“Shall get married before he goes!”

Clutching her father’s hands tightly in her own, she looked up, breathless and terrified, in his face, as if expecting to see him fall to the floor.

Instead, however, of betraying any emotion, he looked at his agitated daughter with a quiet smile, saying, —

“I entirely agree with him.”

On his return to London, Zach found a note summoning him to police headquarters. He went at once, and was there informed by the officer in charge that during his absence Malee had been found, that having, however, no orders to arrest her, they had simply put her under surveillance, pending his return. But thereupon, taking alarm, she had since eluded the vigilance of the experienced detective who was shadowing her, and had again disappeared.

Inciting the chagrined officials to renewed efforts by promise of a liberal reward, and warning them of the cunning and address which the refugee had inherited as a part of her birthright, Zach went

home so confident of success that he wrote a letter to Sandy informing him of his approaching marriage, and confirming his former request of a passage for himself and the hapless Indian.

Meantime, the Falconers returned to town and set on foot preparations for the wedding. Although it was agreed by all that the ceremony should be as simple as possible, it was amazing how many preparations Mason and Sylvia found indispensable, what countless things they thought needful to be done, and what a prodigious bustle they contrived to make over it. Zach looked on in consternation. Very little attention was paid to him or Falconer during those hours of "post haste and romage," in the household. He was puzzled to find of how little consequence he was in this transaction, which was so nearly to affect his life and happiness.

Fortunately, perhaps, he was kept busier than usual in his desire to leave everything ship-shape at the embassy, and so had fewer opportunities of going to Grosvenor Square.

There, it seemed, he invariably found Sylvia occupied, and was perforce turned over to Falconer to be entertained. The two humbled supernumeraries had thus divers long visits together, during which the elder, profiting by his opportunity, informed Zach of all the details of his American affairs, which the young man was commissioned to settle.

On one of these occasions, Zach, on rising to go, with an air of ill-concealed satisfaction handed to his future father-in-law the following letter of introduction, given him by Mr. Rush for presentation to the American Secretary of State.

HON. JOHN QUINCY ADAMS.

Sir, — I take pleasure in recommending to your favorable consideration the bearer of this note, Mr. Zachary Phips, formerly of Boston in your own Commonwealth of Massachusetts, who for the past two years has been acting as my private secretary in this city.

I beg to say most explicitly of Mr. Phips that in my opinion he is a young man of high character and unusual talent; that he is at once bold, prudent, and cool-headed; and in certain exigencies of affairs here has repeatedly acted with admirable judgment.

I would add, moreover, that he is well equipped by special study for his work, that he has had an experience peculiarly adapted to develop confidence and reliance, and that barring some unforeseen disaster he is sure to attain a distinguished position in the honorable profession which he has adopted.

I am, sir, with renewed assurances of respect and esteem,

Your obedient servant,

RICHARD RUSH.

Meanwhile Time, "rolling his ceaseless course," brought on the momentous day.

Amidst all the hurry and preoccupation of the final hours, Zach bethought him with dismay that nothing had been heard of Malee. The reflection caused him extreme and evident anxiety. Moved by a vague suspicion of he knew not what, he ordered detectives to be placed on guard about the house in Grosvenor Square.

On the morning of the wedding-day, at the last minute, Sandy arrived. He announced his ship as ready to sail, and waiting only for her passengers. In addition to the black broadcloth suit, he had now donned a pair of white gloves, — he looked supremely wretched.

The ceremony was to take place at high noon in the old church of St. Martin's. On the part of the groom, besides the unhappy skipper, there were present Mr. and Mrs. Rush, Sir Benjamin West, and a sprinkling of young diplomatists, secretaries and attachés of the different foreign embassies. On the part of the bride there was a small party, composed of the distant relatives and intimate friends of the family.

A slight disturbance in the gallery interrupted for a moment the ceremony, as the groom was about pronouncing his solemn vow, — a noise like the falling of a bench and the rushing of muffled feet. The incident caused a momentary agitation among the few curiosity-seekers whom the ceremony had attracted upstairs, but it was over directly, and nothing more was thought of it.

Certainly if the bride heard she had not heeded it, as on the arm of her new-made husband she came beaming down the aisle in a flood of sunshine which, falling through the southern windows, filled all the nave with amber light. As for the groom, in the solemn joy of the moment he would not have heeded an earthquake.

The reception which followed was unduly large. It had been a whim of Falconer's that nobody should

be omitted, and accordingly a gay and fashionable mob filled the house for several hours.

The host, however, had overestimated his own strength. Wearying soon of the bustle and excitement, he was obliged to withdraw in the midst of the festivities. Thus more responsibility of entertainment fell upon the wedded pair.

Not until the short London day was quite spent did the last guest depart.

The new-made man and wife were left alone. Bidding the butler admit nobody, on whatsoever pretext, the weary happy twain shut themselves up in the library, and there in the cosy twilight, before the flickering embers, sat in speechless content.

And there in that long-dreamt of, long-remembered hour, if so be it can ever come to incarnate spirit, the spell of unutterable joy and peace fell upon them.

Neither profaned the sacred hush with a spoken word, but mingling with Zach's transports came remembrances of all the long, hard, weary way leading up to this blissful goal, remembrances of that humble home in Salutation Alley — of Burr and his great conspiracy — of the sweet days, the studious solitary days at Basswood — of the fiery ordeal of the war — of the forest life at Suwanee, and all that came after.

Envy itself could not have grudged him the hard-earned satisfaction of the retrospect, as he followed the toiling wayfarer and noted the pluck and constancy which had won him the race.

Was then the retrospect all unclouded! Did no

shadow of remorse anywhere darken the path and linger to dim the supreme joy of the present moment?

A low tap at the door interrupted these musings. The dreamers were aroused as from an enchanted sleep. A second and third time the knock was heard, when Zach, with a scowl, arose and went to the door.

After a long whispered conference with somebody in the hall, he came back to his astonished bride.

"Dearest," he said gravely, "there is an important matter which claims my instant attention. I must leave you for a little while, — an hour, — perhaps more. I will come back as soon as possible."

"Mr. Rush has sent for you?"

"No."

"It is not business, then?"

"No; it is something more imperative than business; it is duty."

"But why can it not wait?"

"Believe me, darling, nothing but absolute necessity would take me from you for a moment. I *must* go, — indeed, I must! I promise not to be long."

Her withholding hands barred his every step to the door; her clinging lips would never say farewell. It was with gentle force that he at last freed himself and rushed into the open air.

A hackney-coach was in waiting, an inspector of police sat within. Slamming the door upon his passengers, the coachman drove rapidly away.

Turning from the broad, well-lighted thorough-

fares, they plunged into the poorer quarter of the town, — an interminable distance, with countless turns and windings. A raw wind blew in through the open coach windows, reeking with foulest odors.

Bumping and bouncing over hillocks of offal and through puddles of filthy water, they threaded the unpaved byways given over to poverty, pestilence, and crime.

After the lapse of a full hour, prolonged by suspense to many times its normal length, they drew up at last before a squat building in a dark, narrow street close upon the river.

At a summons from the inspector, the door slowly opened, showing an ill-lighted passage. Stumbling along in the wake of his guide, Zach was ushered into a small room, where a burly official sat half asleep behind a desk.

In answer to a murmured explanation from the inspector, this person nodded and rang a bell.

Soon there appeared behind a grating at the back of the room a grimy-looking man with a lantern. Obeying a gesture from the official behind the desk, the new-comer unlocked a door in the grating, and Zach and his guide were admitted. Following down another long passage, they were ushered into a large vaulted room, or hall, dimly lighted by a lantern swung from the roof.

The icy dampness of the place struck a chill to the very marrow of those entering. Through the unglazed grated windows the river outside could be heard lapping and plashing against its slimy barriers. The swaying lantern of their guide cast long jets of

light up and down the dark stone walls, showing them dripping with moisture.

Disposed in a straggling line down the middle of the room were a score of benches, some of which seemed occupied by sleeping figures.

Sunk deep in slumber they must have been, — those figures, — for not one of them so much as stirred upon the entrance of their visitors.

Before one of these benches the grim guide stopped, and, unceremoniously pulling a coarse drapery from the sleeper, motioned Zach to approach.

White and rigid, he obeyed.

His suspense is at an end. The search at last is over. The quarry has been hunted down.

Disfigured no longer by the tawdry rags of civilization, she wears again her native dress: the tunic, wrought with quills of porcupine, the embroidered leggins, the beaded moccasins, and the eagle plume crowning her black locks.

"The river?" hoarsely murmured the dismayed beholder.

Shaking his head, the official glumly pointed to the hilt of a hunting knife gleaming amidst the disordered drapery.

But what is there besides, — that other object clutched so tightly in the icy hand?

Bending low over the pulseless bosom, he looks to see, and recognizes a small hand-mirror!

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